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THE DHVAJA

(Standards and Flags of India—A Study)

U. P. THAPLIYAL

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सिद्धिः साध्ये सतायस्तु

Most respectfully

dedicated to

the sacred memory of

my uncle

Pandit Maya Dutt Thapliyal

a virtuous man

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Abbreviations

AS	*Arthaśāstra*
ASIAR	Archaeological Survey of India annual report.
AV	*Atharva-veda.*
CCIMC	Catalogue of Coins in Indian Museum, Calcutta.
EI	Epigraphia Indica
EHI	Elements of Hindu Iconography.
IA	Indian Antiquary.
JASB	Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal.
JBBRAS	Journal of the Bombay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society.
JNSI	Journal of the Numismatic Society of India.
JRASB	Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal.
JUPHS	Journal of the UP Historical Society.
MB	*Mahābhārata.*
Ram	*Rāmāyaṇa.*
RV	*Ṛgveda.*

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Translation Table

a	अ	ṭh	ठ्
ā	आ	ḍ	ड्
i	इ	ḍh	ढ्
ī	ई	ṇ	ण्
u	उ	t	त्
ū	ऊ	th	थ्
ṛ	ऋ	d	द्
lṛ	ऌ	dh	ध्
e	ए	n	न्
ai	ऐ	p	प्
o	ओ	ph	फ्
au	औ	b	ब्
ṁ	अं	bh	भ्
h	अः	m	म्
k	क्	y	य्
kh	ख्	r	र्
g	ग्	l	ल्
gh	घ्	v	व्
ṅ	ङ्	ś	श्
c	च्	ṣ	ष्
ch	छ्	s	स्
j	ज्	h	ह्
jh	झ्	kṣ	क्ष्
ñ	ञ्	tr	त्र्
ṭ	ट्	jñ	ज्ञ्

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Preface

In the eighteenth century the East India Company with its growing interest in the politics of the country and consequent military involvements organised its armies on the Presidency basis, and introduced the British custom of military colours and standards. Thus, the institution of military flags in modern India, which include regimental standards and colours, distinguishing flags and service ensigns as well as the customs associated with them owe their origin to a British usage.

Not much is known about the institution prior to the emergence of the British as a military force in India. This study is an attempt to throw light on this unexplored aspect of Indian military history. Originally I had planned to restrict the study to ancient India, but it was eventually enlarged to cover the later periods to complete the picture.

Before I embark upon the subject, it is perhaps necessary to define three terms, *dhvaja* (standard), *patākā* (flag), and *ketu* (crest) widely used in this book. The *dhvaja* stands for a combination of *ketu* i.e. crest or insignia, *paṭṭa* i.e. cloth or drapery, and *yaṣṭi* i.e. staff or pole. It is in this sense that I have used the terms *dhvaja-ketu*, *dhvaja-yaṣṭi* and *dhvaja-paṭṭa*. Many Vedic scholars, epigraphists and numismatists have taken the *dhvaja* to mean a *patākā* i.e. flag or banner implying that it floated in the air. The evidence I have come across, however, leaves no doubt that the *dhvaja* was different from *patākā* and was intended to serve an entirely different purpose.

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The *dhvaja* consisting of a staff surmounted by a sacred motif and often adorned with some cloth has its English equivalent in standard. While the use of standard as a synonym of *dhvaja* is acceptable, it should not be confused with the modern cavalry flags which are also known as standards.

The word *ketu* is generally stated to mean flag or banner. It is also translated as "chief", "head", "leader", "foremost", etc. In later Sanskrit literature it is indiscriminately used to mean *dhvaja* and *patākā*. It does not, however, have these meanings in the early Vedic age where it has often been used as an adjective of Agni meaning light or brilliance. In the *Atharva-veda* the term *ketu* occasionally conveys the same sense as *dhvaja*. The warriors are often called upon to prepare for war with their *ketus*. In the *Mahābhārata* it came to denote the crest i.e. insignia or capital of the *dhvaja*. This is evident from the epithets *Vanara-ketu* and *Hastikakṣya-mahāketu* applied to Arjuna and Karṇa respectively. Subsequently, it came to denote *dhvaja* itself.

Patākā on the other hand was simply a piece of cloth mounted on a pole and did not bear any crest. It was thus different from *dhvaja* and came into vogue at a later date and with a different purpose. This has not, however, been noticed by the Sanskrit scholars. Apte, for instance, translates patākā as standard, flag or banner or a sign, emblem, mark or symbol. In the *Arthasastra*[1] the *dhvaja* and the *patākā* appear as two different heraldic devices.

---

1. तूर्यध्वजपताकाभिः

As, II.33.11, Also X.6.46 ; The *Mahābhārata* also makes a clear distinction between the two.

ते ध्वजाः संवृतास्तेषां पताकाभिः समन्ततः ।
नानावर्णविरागाभिर्विबभुः सर्वतो वृताः ॥

MB, Droṇa, 80.5

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This was actually the case as late as the 10th century AD as is evident from the *Avantisundarī* of Daṇḍina.[2] *Vacaspatyam* defines *dhvaja* as rectangular in shape and *patākā* triangular[3]. In ancient India the most important difference between the *dhvaja* and *patākā* was that the former invariably bore or carried an insignia or symbol whereas the latter did not.

In the process of its evolution the *dhvaja* in the early medieval period assumed the form of a *patākā*. Though the *dhvaja* in the changed shape, still maintained the distinction of bearing the *ketu* or *symbol* the people started the use of the terms *dhvaja* and *pātāka* indiscriminately. This usage of the terms still persists.

The terms such as colours, standards and guidons used in the last chapter of this book also need some clarification. The term colour is applied to the British infantry flags. It is believed that before the end of the 16th century the flags of the infantry from their diversity of hues, had gained the name of colours. In medieval Europe standard was a very large flag which was meant to remain stationary instead of being carried. In the course of time, the term came to be applied also to cavalry flags. 'Guidon' is a small and tailed cavalry flag. It ranks below the standard.

This study has led me to two important conclusions, which happens to be in conflict with popularly accepted theories. The first relates to the origin of the *dhvaja* and the second to the interpretation of the terms *dhvaja*, *patākā*, and *ketu*. I have tried to show that the origin of

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2. ध्वजापताकादीनि राजचिन्हानि

Avantisundarī, p. 53

3. त्रिकोणवै पताकास्यु चतुष्कोण ध्वजा स्मृता

Vācaspatyam, p. 4212

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dhvaja can be traced to totemism and not to the Vedic *sthūna* or *yūpa*. Similarly my conclusion that *dhvaja*, *patākā*, and *ketu* indicate different things is not in accord with the view of scholars who regard the terms as synonymous.

For this work I am greatly indebted to the Ministry of Defence, which provided me with an opportunity to learn the science of heraldry. I am also grateful to the National Museum and the Director General, Archaeology, New Delhi for providing me with some useful photographs. My special thanks are due to Dr. N.R. Banerjee, Dr. G.N. Pant, the late Dr. V.P. Dwivedi and Shri A.S. Bist of the National Museum, Dr. Romila Thapar of the Jawaharlal University, Dr. Devahuti of the Delhi University, Dr. S.C. Kala of the Allahabad Museum, Madras Museum, Madras Dr. K.N. Pandey and Shri T.R. Tandon of the Ministry of Defence and Lt. Col. V.K. Anand (Retd.) of the Indian Engineers for their valuable guidance and help. I am also indebted to my colleague Smt. Karuna Srivastava who advised me to broaden the scope of the study to cover the medieval and modern periods as well.

I have no words to express my gratitude to my brothers Sarvashri D.P. Thapliyal, S.P. Thapliyal and B.P. Thapliyal and to my wife Sarojini for their kind encouragement. I am also grateful to my cousin Shri Lalit Mohan Thapliyal who made some valuable suggestions to improve the quality of the book. The book is humbly dedicated to the memory of my uncle Pandit Maya Dutt Thapliyal, a virtuous man.

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1

The Origin of Dhvaja

Anthropological studies reveal that totemism was an integral part of the life of early man. The hunting and food gathering people lived in small nomadic hordes. Several hordes considered themselves related by bonds of kinship, and the larger social unit was the clan or tribe. Many such groups were named after an animal or plant or some object held sacred by the tribe and adopted as its totem. The representation of the totem became an emblem, a badge of identification and the symbol of the clan's unity. Some totemic designs were carved on churinga wooden or stone.

Studies conducted among American aborigines illustrate this point very well.[1] The Dakota people inhabiting the Mississippi and Missouri river basins have societies named after animals. "Every separate body of Indians is divided into bands or tribes, which band or tribe forms a little community within the nation to which it belongs. As the nation has some particular symbol by which it is distinguished from others, so each tribe has a badge from which it is denominated : as that of the eagle, the panther, the tiger, the buffalo, etc. One band of Naudowissies (Sioux) is represented by a snake, another a tortoise, a third a squirrel, a fourth a wolf and a fifth a buffalo. Throughout every nation they particularise themselves in the same manner and the meanest person among them will remember his lineal descent, and distinguish himself by his respective family[2]".

Among the Ojibwas, a tribe which inhabits the Lake Superior

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region, the totem signifies the symbol or device of a gens or a tribe; thus the figure of a wolf was the totem of the wolf gens. In the same manner bears, turtle, crane, hawk, eagle, etc., were the symbols of the gens bearing such names[3]. Many gens believe in the transformation of their first progenitors from the animals or inanimate objects, which became the symbol of the gens. Thus the crane gens of the Ojibwas have a legend that a pair of cranes changed into a man and woman by the great spirit, were the progenitors of the crane gens[4].

Among the Haides of the north-west coast of America representation of animals are tatooed on the bodies of the clan members, displayed on their clothing and carved, painted or otherwise marked on their bodies. These objects also served as symbols of the clan[5].

Studies among the aborigines of Africa also confirm the existence of totemism in all its details there. The Bechuana tribes of south Africa are named after certain animals, showing probably that in ancient times they were addicted to animal worship like the ancient Egyptians. The term Bakatla means 'they of the monkey'; Bakuona, 'they of the alligator'; Batlapi, 'they of the fish', each tribe having a superstitious dread of the animal after which it was called .... A tribe never eats the animal which is its namesake[6].

The story of the Indian sub-continent is no different. A large number of tribes in India are organised on a totemic basis. As the chase and crude farming were their mainstay the animals and plants naturally find a place in the totemic structure of these tribes. The Santhals have more than one hundred clans all named after plants, animals and material objects. Various tribes of the Mundas own a similar totem derived from animal and plant life. Various clans of the Bhils are named after the serpent, pumpkin, jackal and other totems[7].

The totem commands great respect. The skins of the animals are donned by the groups on solemn occasions. Many groups paint or tattoo their bodies with the picture of the totemic animal which serves as their coat-of-arms. If the totem is a dangerous animal, it is propitiated so as to spare the members of the totemic clan. If the totem plant or animal is edible it could be eaten on ceremonial occasions[8]. The Oraons of central India erect wooden totem-posts and make occasional offerings in front of

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them. The Gond tiger clan worship the tiger on the occasion of wedding[9].

But how about the evolution of the totem ? Bras, Hill, Tout and Swanton all believe that totemism has been derived from the generalisation of the individual totem. "Some eminent man, having found by experience of value of a totem, chose it for himself of his own free will, transmitted it to his descendants, these later multiplying as time went on, finally forming the extended family known as a clan[10]". Thus the totem became collective.

This fact, fundamental to the issue of totem and its successor standard, is amply borne out by the studies carried out among the tribes of India. The story of the origin of Kujur sect among the Oraons is an example. An Oraon had fallen asleep under a Kujur plant. A flexible twig of the plant entwined itself round his body and protected him from molestation. Accordingly the man took the Kujur plant for his totem and his descendants are now the Kujur sect.[11] The story of the origin of Pandu-Bing clan among the Tamaria also illustrates this point. A Tamaria woman went to fetch water leaving her baby at home. On her return she found a cobra (*Pāṇḍu Biṅg*) protecting the baby. Not surprisingly the descendants of the child belong to the serpent clan and none among them dare harm a serpent.[12] Similar is the story of the Tortoise clan. An Oraon of olden times was about to catch a tortoise, when the latter is said to have exclaimed—"I am your *jat* (caste fellow)". And so the man desisted from catching it, and his descendants came to form the Tortoise clan.[13] Almost all the clans have some such story related to their names.

The religious aspect of totemism, is, however, much more significant in the context of our study. This is best illustrated in the words of Roy, "Although the general attitude of the Oraon to his clan totem is that of a man to his equal, to his friend and ally—there is a practice still existing which appears to be a survival of a period when at any rate a few of the more powerful among the totems were evolving, if not in actual deities, at any rate into fetishes believed to bring success in hunting or war. Here and there at an Oraon *jātrā*, you see the young man of a village carrying on their shoulders a wooden plank on which stands a tiger or a pig, or an

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ox, or other animals or a bird. But if you accompany one such *jātrā* party from their own village to the *jātrā* ground, you will find that these supposed fanciful emblems are actually treated almost as deities and propitiated with sacrifices .... If you ask the people the significance of these wooden, clay or brass figures, they can only tell you that they are the ancient emblems of the village. On further enquiry, however, you find that in some, though not in all, cases, the figure represents the totem animal of the Bhuinhars or first Oraon settlers of the village. Thus, the Bhuinhars of village Jāmgai in thana Lohārdāngā, and the village Prāyāgu, in thana Māndār, belong to the tiger clan, and wooden tigers are the emblems that each of these villagers carry to the *jātrās*.[14] This is true of many more villages.

Totemism seems to have developed on these lines in the early phases of history. This was probably the manner in which the totem assumed the form of a *dhvaja* among the early people of India. For the pre-historic period and afterward the evidence is more precise. The Indus Valley people can be identified as totemistic with great certainty. Some animals and trees were conceived as personal deities and endowed with attributes and functions. This can be said with great certainty about the animals such as unicorn widely occurring on the Indus seals. Incidentally, this animal had a definite association with the standard of the Indus Valley people as will be explained later.

The Vedic Āryans present a similar picture. According to Oldenberg, the fish and the dog people of the *Ṛgveda* were totemistic clans[15]. Macdonell and Keith find in the Sigru tribe of the *Ṛgveda*, a plausible indication of totemism as sigri means horse-radish[16]. In invocation of certain plants in the Vedas some totemistic beliefs are suggested[17]. According to C.D. Chatterjee "it now appears to be certainty that some influence of totemism can be traced in the *Ṛgveda*.... The influence becomes all the more marked in the later Vedic works as well as in the Epics, the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata*, though none of them have preserved the name of a single totemistic clan"[18]. The monkey tribe of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, however, appeared to be a group of people who either tattooed their faces like monkeys or carried the monkey symbol with them in a prominent manner.

The above survey of the totems in relationship with gens in the old and the new world shows a clear bond between the two. Goldenweiser

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summing up the relationship says that hereditary kinship groups, such as clans, with a strong feeling of common interest and solidarity tend, so socio-psychological experience shows, to project their community spirit in some concrete thing which henceforth stands for the unity of the group and readily acquires a certain hallo of sanctity[19].

Owing to its sacred nature and traditional appeal, the totemic symbol provided a rallying point to the community. In the unceasing struggle for survival it also served as a symbol of hope and victory to the adherents. The need for a better display of this distinguishing and sacred motif seems to have led to the evolution of the *dhvaja*[20]. It seems that in early stages the *dhvajas* were made of a light material. It was worshipped by the clan when in peace and carried to the field in war. Subsequently it found a place in the temple, and thus was born the *dhvaja-stambha.* This has been dealt with in detail in Chapter III. Portable *dhvajas*, however, continued to be made for use in war and ceremonials as is borne out by literary and art sources.

The special requirements of the battle field have greatly contributed to the evolution of *dhvaja.* In fact, "In military expeditions where any degree of organisation and discipline prevailed, objects of such a kind would be necessary to mark out the lines and stations of encampment, and to keep in order the different bands when marching or in battle. And, in addition to all this, it cannot be doubted that flags or their equivalents have often served, by reminding men of past resolves, past deeds, past heroes, to rally to enthusiasm these sentiments of *esprit de corps*, of family pride and honour, of personal devotion, patriotism, or religion, upon which, as well as upon good leadership, discipline; and numerical force, success in warfare depends"[21].

Man has, therefore, fought since the earliest times under some sort of standard. The Egyptians were probably the earliest to use standards in war. According to Thomas Simes "the original use of ensigns or colours in war came from the Egyptians, who being under no regular discipline, and therefore, often invaded and overcome by their neighbours, invented the carrying of some conspicuous sign or token which the soldier might follow and upon any defeat or dispersion of their troops, resort to".[22] The Assyrians and the Jews followed a similar practice. The Chinese standards bore figures of dragons, white tigers, red sparrows, snakes and

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tortoises. Ancient Persians displayed a vulture on a javelin. The Achaemenids' standard bore the emblem of two bulls running in opposite directions. The Greeks choose an armour piece and the Romans an eagle for their standard (Pl. 1).

Indian art historians have however explained the origin of *dhvaja* differently. According to J.N. Banerjea "the practice of erecting *dhvajas* or votive columns in honour of various sectarian deities . . . .remind us not only of the memorial column, one of whose early prototypes was the wooden *sthūna* of the Vedic burial mounds, but also of the *yūpastambhas* which were erected by the kings and noble men of yore in commemoration of their performance of the various Vedic sacrifices".[23] But the *dhvaja* had a much older tradition in India is evident from the Indus seals. To trace its origin to the vedic *sthūna* or *yūpastambha* is also to ignore the fact that the *dhvaja* was already known and used by the Vedic Āryans when they settled in India.

John Irwin holds that "behind the Ashokan pillars lies a much older tradition of the portable sacred standard which seems to have had an important role in Indian cult worship at least from the second millennium B.C."[24] But his effort to trace the origin of *dhvaja* in the Vedic *sthūna* seems faulty and thus open to criticism. Further more, Asoka might have directly borrowed from the existing wooden *dhvaja-stambas* rather than from the portable standards.

S.P. Gupta rightly holds that Aśokan pillars emerged out of the *dhvaja-stamba*. He disagrees with John Irwin's view of a close relationship between Aśokan pillars and the Vedic *yūpas* on the ground that *yūpa* is an uncrowned monument.[25] But his interpretation of *Indra-dhvaja* is self contradictory and open to question. He translates it as the pillar of Indra, and describes it as a folk cult object connected with the festival of *Indra-mahā* in which *Indra-yaṣṭi* or just a pole was worshipped, "What is important to note is that at no stage the *dhvaja* or pole bore any figure on its top".[26] Further "the pillar topped with the image of something sacred on its own right such as the *mahāpaśus* (like the elephant, bull and horse), appears to be an innovation of Aśoka. He combined the two independent sacred elements into one and initiated something not known to the Indians earlier".[27]

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The contention that *Indra-dhvaja* did not carry any crowning motif and that it was Aśoka who combined the two sacred elements i.e. the pillar and the crowning motif, is not in accord with literary and archaeological evidence. We know that portable standards were in use as early as the Vedic age. The Indus Valley seals hardly leave any scope for doubt that *dhvaja* had come to stay in India with all its details in this period. The evidence of the Epics is abounding on the *dhvajas*. These portable *dhvajas* referred to in literature and depicted on the seals were indeed born from the earlier totems and always carried a crowning motif.

In this context, the view expressed by Niharranjan Ray is significant. "An important element in the primitive religion of central and eastern India was the animal standard, the *dhvaja-stambha* of later Indian literature, i.e. posts or pillars crowned by animals considered sacred and therefore worshipped by primitive peoples. This trait of primitive religion was not particularly characteristic of India alone, but was equally potent in Babylonia and Assayria as well as ancient Greece. Later Brahmanical mythology knows of such standards or *stambhas* of at least three different animal Gods viz. the Garuḍa, the Vṛṣa and the Makara, the Vāhanas of Viṣṇu, Śiva, Gaṅgā and Kandarpa respectively. . . . It was entirely from such early specimen of primitive animal standards made of impermanent materials like *śāla* wood and bamboo wood etc. that the Mauryan seem to have derived the inspiration of erecting monumental pillars crowned by sacred animals".[28] This is probably the best explanation of the evolution of *dhvaja*.

In view of the above, efforts to trace the origin of *dhvaja* to the *yūpa* or *sthūna* do not seem justified. In fact the realisation that the *dhvaja* was in universal use in the Harappan culture which preceded the Vedic culture provides a new perspective to the whole issue. Thus the origin of *dhvaja* in India has to be traced beyond the Āryans. Indo Āryans themselves were a member of a race which spread over the wide regions of the world from central Asia. Indeed, among all these people the origin of *dhvaja* has to be explained in a like manner.

The above survey leads us to the conclusion that :

(i) *Dhvaja* evolved from the totem.
(ii) It assumed the form of a portable standard when carried in war.

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(iii) Independent *stambhas* or pillars were also erected to honour this sacred motif.

(iv) The association of *dhvaja* with temples was a very late phenomenon.

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14. Roy, S.C., *op. cit.*, pp. 339-341. Oraons also carry flags in Jātras. *Ibid*, pp. 342-344.
15. Oldenberg, as quoted by D.N. Majumdar, *op. cit.*, p. 349: Also *Vedic Index*, Vol. II, pp. 121, 378.
16. *Vedic Index*, II, p. 378.
17. "Plants are frequently invoked as divinities, chiefly in enumeration along with waters, rivers, mountains heaven and earth. One entire hymn (*RV*, x. 97) is, however, devoted to the praise of the plants (Osadhi) alone, mainly with regard to their healing powers. Later Vedic texts mention offerings made to plants and the adoration paid to large trees passed in marriage processions." Macdonell, A.A., *History of Sanskrit* Literature, p. III.

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18. *Indian Science Congress*, 26th Session Report, 1939.
19. Alexander Goldenweiser as quoted by Malefjit, *op. cit.*, p. 95.
20. For a definition of term *dhvaja* see preface.

    In this connection it is notable that flag in the modern sense evolved at a much later stage. "Although in earlier times drapery was occasionally used for standards, and was often appended as ornament to those of other material, it was probably not until the middle Ages that it became the special material of military and other ensigns; and perhaps not until the practice of heraldry had attained to definite nomenclature and laws does anything appear which is in the modern sense a flag." *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Vol. IX (9th edn.), p. 277.
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2

Dhvaja and Religion

Dhvaja was essentially a religious object. The motif represented on it invested it with sanctity. This motif was related to the faith of the people like the *Garuḍa* among the Bhāgavatas and *Nandi* among the Śaivas in a later period.

A seal from Mohenjo-daro representing four men in file, each carrying a standard vividly illustrates the point.[1] Of the two standards clearly seen in the two impressions of the seal (Pl. 3), one bears a unicorn type of animal and the other the well known cult object always placed in front of the unicorn which has been identified as an incense burner. The animal was either a God or more probably a manifestation of a God. The incense burner probably represents the cult of the unicorn. Sometimes it appears separately and sometimes in association with the cult deity. The scene is similar to the religious processions of the Buddhists widely represented in the art of Bhārhut and Sānchī. The *dhvaja* which the Vedic Āryans beseeched to grant them victory was a symbol of religious significance.[2] It was this association of *dhvaja* with religion that subsequently led to the erection of *dhvaja-stambhas* in the temple premises. According to James Fergusson "*stambhas* or *lāts* are pillars usually erected in front of a temple whether Śaiva, Vaiṣṇava, Jain or Bauddha, and carrying one or more symbols of religion to which it was dedicated; the Buddhist *stambhas* bearing the wheel representation of *dharma* or the law or the lions. The Śaiva one bears a *triśūla* or trident, the Vaiṣṇava the figure of Garuḍa, the Jain a *Caumukha* or four-fold Tirthankaras. Some

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of the finest Buddhist *lāts* created by Aśoka are not apparently in connection with any temple but bear his edicts or other inscriptions; they may, however, have been created in connection with wooden or brick buildings which have disappeared long ago."[3]

Ananda K. Coomaraswamy also holds a similar view. "At Vidisā (Besnagar) there still stands the Garuḍa pillar, lacking only in capital, which was erected in 140 B.C. by Heliodora, the ambassador of Antialkidas, in honour of Vāsudeva. At the same site have been found two fan palm capitals and a *makara* capital apparently derived from other pillars indicating that at least one important Vaishṇava temple must have been in existence here in second century BC."[4] Two fan palm capitals pertaining to the same period have also been discovered in Pawāyā, Gwalior.[5] It may be remarked here that *Makara-dhvaja* implies the cult of Pradyumna.[6] The *dhvaja* thus seems essentially associated with religion and with manifestations of divinity. The destruction of a *dhvaja* was considered sacrilegious and the offender had to repair the damage and pay a fine of five hundred *paṇas*.[7]

The Purāṇic view

The Purāṇas and the Āgamas provide abundant evidence on the religious significance of the *dhvaja*. The act of installing a *dhvaja* in honour of a deity was called *dhvaja-dāna* and it was considered an act of great merit.[8] How it was done in respect of the goddess Durgā is detailed in the *Devi Purāṇa*.[9] In fact, there is hardly a god, big or small, who is not allotted a *dhvaja* in the relevant section of the *Āgmas* and the *Purāṇas*. In the *Vaikhānasāgama* various gods and godesses described as *Parivāradevatas* in the scheme of a Viṣṇu temple are described invariably along with their *vāhanas* and *dhvajas*.

This Brāhmaṇic tradition of associating a *dhvaja* with a god is also indicated by archaeological sources. The Besnagar pillar inscription records the erection of a *Garuḍādhvaja* in honour of god Vāsudeva in front of the shrine.[10] The adjacent shrines of sectarian deities *viz.* Saṁkaraṣaṇa and Pradyumna were marked by the presence of *Tālādhvaja* and *Makarādhvaja* respectively.[11] A second century stone cock discovered in Lalabhagat probably formed a part of a *Dhvajāstambha* erected in front of a Kārttikeya shrine (Pl. 20).[12] An Ikṣvāku inscription also refers to the erection of *dhvaja* in front of the temple of Puspabhadrasvāmī, i.e. Śiva.[13] The

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Visnu-dhvaja referred to in the Mehrauli inscription was obviously associated with the shrine of the Bhāgavata deity Viṣṇu.[14]

Secular literature provides similar evidence. *Kādambarī* gives a graphic description of the *dhvaja* installed at the temple of Caṇḍikā, which was appended with red flags and red *cauris* and surmounted by a crescent motif.[15] According to a Cola inscription a sacred banner (*tirukkodi*) was hoisted at the Rājarājeśvara temple at the time of the annual festival.[16] In fact the very presence of a *dhvaja* indicated the existence of a shrine.[17] In the *Kalingattu Parāṇi* there is a reference to seven female deities whose banners were painted with the symbols of buffalo, bird, devil, peacock, bull, eagle and elephant, respectively.[18] The *dhvaja* was a vital feature of the temple complex and necessarily attracted the attention of the passersby.[19]

In course of time rules were formulated for the construction and consecration of *dhvajas* in temples. The *Agni Purāṇa* describes these in detail. "The God said : O Skanda! I shall now describe the portions of the consecration ceremony which appertain to the pinnacle and the banner of a divine temple or edifice, or to the other gods dwelling therein. In the case of a brick-built divine edifice lying half underneath the water of a tank or half of which is only visible on the surface of the earth, the flag should be made of wood, while it should be of stone where the edifice would be built of the same material. The ornamental top pitcher over the pinnacle of a temple, in which an image of god Viṣṇu had been installed, should be furnished with a quoit or disc which is the divine insignia of the same god. The flag post at the top of a temple, in which a phallic emblem had been installed, should be provided with a trident at its top, mounted over by another such small phallic emblem. The banner should be made to reach down to the half of the plinth of the temple or to commensurate with its entire length, or of the same length with its rod, according to the option of the consecrator. The banner known as *Mahā-dhvaja* should be made to flap around the platform of the edifice and should be tied or hung down from the rod respectively measuring fourteen, nine, or six cubits in length. A banner of above class is held as imparting all sorts of boon to the consecrator."[20]

Buddhist Practice

The Buddhists, adopting an existing practice employed the *dhvaja* in the service of religion after what appears to be some initial hesitation, as

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evidenced by a dialogue between the Buddha and a disciple, recorded in the Chinese version of *Sarvāstivādin Vinayapiṭaka.*[21]

'Would Buddha allow me to construct in front of the *stūpa* a tall pillar and to place on top of it a lion ? Does he think this is a good thing to do ?' The Buddha replies, 'I will allow you to construct it.'

'Would the Buddha allow me to construct a railing round the four sides of the lion ? Does he regard it as a good thing to do ? The Buddha replies, 'I will it to be constructed.' Would the Buddha allow me to make the lion in copper ? Does he think it a good thing to do ? This is put to the Buddha. The Buddha says, 'I will it to be made.' 'Would the Buddha allow banner to be placed over the copper lion ? Does he think it a good thing to do ? The matter is put to the Buddha. The Buddha says, 'I allow them to be attached.'

Significantly the *Mahi-śāśaka Vinayapiṭaka* the Chinese translation of a lost Indian text, says that in front of a *stūpa dhvaja* should be erected. These could bear elephants, lions and other animals for their emblems.[22] Indeed like the Brāhmanic temples the Buddhist *stūpas* were also provided with the *Dhvaja-stambhas.*[23]

Once given the seal of the Master, Buddhists went all out to use the *Dhvaja* to preach the gospel. Ample proof of the practice has been presented in the art of Bhārhut, Sānchī, Mathurā and Amarāvatī, that the devotees had started its use in the service of religion even before the time of Aśoka has been ably proved by John Irwin in his study of the *Mauryan dhvajas.*[24] Incidentally, even Aśoka admits the existence of such *Dhvaja-stambhas* when he commands them to be used for writing inscriptions.[25] These were Buddhistic in character is indicated by the animals such as elephant, lion, horse and bull which crown these columns. These were symbolic of significant events in the life of the Buddha.

Aśoka caused many *Dhvaja-stambhas* to be erected at holy places of Buddhist significance with a view to spreading the message of *dharma.* The art of Bhārhut and Sānchī is replete with scenes of people paying respects to *stambhas* bearing the *triratna* or *cakra* symbol for the crest. This was also the practice in the 4th century A.D. as stated by Fa-Hien,[26] the Chinese traveller, who chanced to see a shining pillar with a lion on

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top at Sankisa. Once upon a time, he was told, there had been a contention between the Buddhists and the heretics as to who had the right over this pillar. Eventually the feuding parties made a compact. It was agreed that if the Buddhists had rights there ought to be some supernatural intervention to prove it—whereupon the lion on top of the pillar made a great roar, and, witnessing this testimony, the unbelievers, withdrew abashed, leaving the pillar to the Buddhists.

In Fa-Hien's travels we also have a description of two pillars, 70 feet high, which adorned the entrance of Jetavāna monastery, outside the gates of Srāvastī, in the time of Śākya-muni. One of these was surmounted by a wheel and the other by an ox.[27] Hsuan-tsang who visited the place after some 200 years, also describes the pillars as bearing the wheel and ox symbols respectively.[28]

Some of these *Dhvaja-stambhas* were erected by foreigners who settled in India and embraced Buddhism. The famous lion capital of Mathurā, which has a Kharoṣthi inscription and a some what Iranian aspect was dedicated by the queen of Kṣatrapa Rañjubula, the last Yavana king of Punjab, probably about 30 B.C.[29] This lady is also believed to have founded a *Guha-vihāra.*

Like the Brāhmaṇas and the Buddhists, the Jainas also erected *dhvajas* at their temples. A Jaina votive plaque from Mathurā dating about the beginning of the Christian era represents a Jain *stūpa* of the high cylindrical type standing on a terrace approached by a single stair. At either side of the shrine there are two *stambhas* respectively with a *dhamma-cakra* and lion.[30] In the Jain *Ādi Purāṇa* there are many references to kings making *dhvaja-dāna* to the temples.[31] *Pāli-dhvaja* is in fact stated to be integral to a Jaina shrine in this Purāṇa.

The cumulative evidence thus furnished suggests that :

(1) *Dhvaja* was basically an object of faith.
(2) It was very widely used by the proto-historic Indians, inhabiting the Indus Valley.
(3) Āryans paid great respect to their *dhvajas.*
(4) *Dhvaja* came to be associated with a shrine at a later date. It were probably the Buddhists who popularised this practice.

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(5) *Dhvaja* in the beginning comprised a pillar and a crowning motif. A banner by which we mean a piece of cloth or drapery was attached to it later.

(6) *Ketu* or the crowning motif was basic to the scheme of the *dhvaja*.

Beliefs and Portents

There were also some beliefs and portents associated with the *dhvaja*. The *Bṛhatsaṁhitā* enumerates many of them. "The wise declose that there is great danger in store for the king if a carcase-eating bird, owl, dove, crow or vulture sits on the banner. If it be a blue jay, the danger is for the *Yuvarāja*; an eagle sitting on it will deprive the king of his eyes. The king will die if the umbrella on the banner breaks or falls down. If honey bees cling to it, there will be danger from thieves; a meteor falling on it augurs of the perceptors' death; a lightning that of the queen. The fall of the flag denotes the queen's death, while that of an ornament augurs drought.... If any of the staffs called Indra's daughters break courtezens will die. If the ropes should give way, children will suffer. If the prop at the bottom breaks, it indicates trouble to the king's mother.[32]

According to *Agni-Purāṇa* the *dhvaja* staff breaking down in the middle at the time of planting augured evil to the consecrator and to the sovereign of the country.[33] Such ill omen were remedied by the recital of the Veda, propitiation of Brāhmaṇas and offerings to deities.[34]

A birth mark on the body was considered a sign of divine grace and greatness.[35] In the *Raghuvaṁśa*, Raghu, the great Sūryavaṁśī ruler, besides other auspicious symbols, bore a *dhvaja* marks in his foot.[36] Men of royal descent were generally blessed with it.[37]

Dhvaja-Mahotsava

In ancient India a great ceremony was performed in the honour of *dhvaja* called *dhvajamahotsava* or *Indra-dhvaja-mahotsava* after Indra, the Vedic god of war. It seems that the celebration was performed at the end of a successful campaign by the kings. Subsequently it appears to have become ritualistic and routine, irrespective of success in battle.

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The custom of honouring the *dhvaja* as symbolic of Indra or Śatakṛtu seems to be Vedic in origin. The *Ṛgveda* hymn "The chanters hymn thee, they who say the word of praise magnify thee. The priests have raised thee up on high, O' Śatakṛtu, like a pole" clearly suggests this.[38] In the *Rāmāyaṇa* it is clearly stated that the *Indra-dhvaja* was held aloft on a pole with the help of a cord at the time of the *mahotsava*.[39]

The ceremony was first performed by King Uparicara Vasu. The *Mahābhārata* relates that pleased with this king Indra granted him the boon of a *yaṣṭi* possessed with powers to protect the gentle. King Vasu after a year of the boon planted this *yaṣṭi* on the ground and subsequently worshipped it. Indra was greatly pleased at the gesture and granted the boon that whosoever worshipped him in the like manner would achieve victory and wealth for himself and his state. King Vasu performed this ceremony once in a year and in this he was followed by subsequent rulers.[40]

The *Rāmāyaṇa* also refers to *Indra-dhvaja-mahotsava*, which concluded on the full moon day in the month of *Aśvina*. The ceremony ended with the lowering of *Indra-dhvaja* to the ground.[41] The *Bṛhatsaṁhitā* gives a detailed account of the ceremony annually performed by the rulers. It lasted four days commencing on *Drādaśī* and concluding on *Pūrṇamāsī* (full moon day). On the fifth day the *dhvaja-visarjana* was performed by the ruler accompanied by the ministers.[42] During this festival the vassal kings also came to the royal court to pay their respects.[43]

The *Śilappadikāram*, a Tamil work of the eighth Century AD, has a chapter describing how the annual festival of Indra was celebrated in Kavirippūm-paṭṭinam, the metropolis of the Colas : it states that the festival began on the Pūrṇimā of the solar month Vaiśākha and was continued for twenty-eight days. An inscription belonging to the reign of Parāntaka Cola I also mentions the details of the arrangements made for celebrating the festival of Indra.[44]

The evidence thus furnished by literature is corroborated by the numismatic sources. It is quite probable that the coins bearing the symbol of *dhvaja* were issued by the kings to commemorate the *Dhvajā-mahotsava*. That the Gupta rulers also observed the ceremony is

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suggested by the representation of the *Garuḍa* standard on their coins. Samudragupta performed it for the attainment of victory, prosperity and glory.[45] The occurrence of various *dhvaja* types such as *Jaya-dhvaja*, *Matsya-dhvaja* and *Nandipāda-dhvaja*[46] on punch marked coins may be explained in like manner.

With the passage of time the ceremony became more elaborate and ritualistic.[47] The king first worshipped the *yaṣṭi* and this was followed by *dhvajotthāna* or the raising of standard in the presence of the four-fold army. The royal household and the generals also worshipped the *dhvaja*. On this occasion the rulers bestowed costly dresses on their servants as a token of royal favour. The function concluded with military exercises and sports.[48]

Gradually *Indra-dhvaja* became an object of display. The belief came to stay that "If a king wants to conquer his enemies and desires to acquire fame he should order the *Indra-dhvaja* to be displayed on all important buildings of the state and should in no case allow them to be dislodged from their place or else it would mean perdition and ruination for him and his state."[49] On festive occasions people also joined in this great display of standards and flags. When Kṛṣṇa reached Hastināpura on the eve of the *Rājasūya* ceremony of the Pāṇḍavas the whole city bore a festive look with standards and flags flying high on houses.[50]

Indradhvaja

The *Indra-dhvaja* or the standard of Indra, probably originated from a symbol which served as a rallying point to the Vedic Āryans during their advance into India. As Indra was the war god of the Āryans, this symbol came to be known as *Indra-dhvaja*. Subsequently it also got the name *Vaijayanta* i.e. the harbinger of victory.

The Vedic evidence seems to suggest that the *dhvaja* of Indra was shaped like a *stambha*. The *stambha* (pillar) hymn of the *Artharva-veda* says that 'everything is contained in *stambha* and this *stambha* is Indra, and again everything is contained in Indra and this Indra is *stambha*,[51] and this is a sure indication that Indra had come to be identified with something like *stambha* at least in the later Vedic period. It, therefore, seems quite possible that this *stambha*, whatever its meaning and symbolism represented the *dhvaja* of Indra.

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In this connection a passage in the *Ṛgveda* meaning 'who for ten milch-kine purchaseth from me this Indra who is mine ? When he hath slain the Vṛtras let the buyer give him back to me'[52] is of unusual interest. Kramrisch has rightly suggested that the word 'Indra' may have been referred here to a portable Indra-pole or banner used as a battle-standard.[53] This reference also implies that in the *Vedic* age *Indra-dhvaja* was manufactured with a view to hiring it to the warriors, aspiring for victory in war. The exact shape of *Indra-dhvaja* in the Vedic period is not, however, known.[54]

The *Mahābhārata* describes the *Indra-dhvaja* as dark blue, shining and beautiful like a blue lotus. The staff was made of bamboo and worked upon with gold.[55] The *dhvaja-ketu* is not mentioned here but in another context the allusion that king Uparicara worshipped god Indra as sitting on a staff in swan form[56] suggests that 'Swan on the Staff' formed the *Indra-dhvaja* at least in the Epic age, if not earlier. Later in the *Bṛhatsaṁhitā* some details of the *Indra-dhvaja* are given but these are inadequate to provide a definite picture of the *dhvaja*.[57] Many good and great qualities were associated with this *dhvaja* of hoary antiquity. Its renown was superb and its capacity infinite so much so that Indra could protect the earth from the depredations of the Asuras only with the help of his *dhvaja*.[58]

The *Rāmāyaṇa* while referring to the *Indra-dhvaja* does not give any indication of its shape.[59] In the *Vāmana Purāṇa* it is, however, stated to bear resemblance with a *dhvaja* composed of a mace decorated with silk stripes.[60] Later literature is also silent on this point. V. S. Agrawala and others have however, identified a triangle headed standard occurring on the punch-marked coins as *Indra-dhvaja*.[61] In any case it needs no emphasis that *Indra-dhvaja* was fundamental to the growth of war standard in the subsequent periods of Indian history, so much so that *Vaijayanta*, a term originally applied to *Indra-dhvaja*, came to mean *dhvaja* itself in the Gupta period.[62]

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Devī Pu, 35-24.

यस्य देवस्य यच्चिन्हं तन्यत्रेण स्थिरं चरेत्
स्वर्गच्छेद्ध्वजदानात्तु भुवि राजा बली भवेत्

Agni Pu, 61.50

अपि नः सन्ततौ जातो ध्वजं केशवमन्दिरे,
दास्यते देवदेवाय दर्पि पुष्पानुलियनम् ॥

Vāmana Pu, 68.42

9. देव्या ध्वज प्रमाणन्तु विधि दण्डस्य लांछनम् ।
दीपते च यथा नाथ तदशेजं ब्रवीहि नः ॥
अन्डजं वान्डजं वापि ध्वजं केश विवर्ज्जितम् ।
नमं समञ्च श्लक्षणं च प्रसादाद्दन्डमर्द्धितम् ॥
समं सूक्ष्ममृजं शुभ्रं शैलं वा धातुजं पिवा ।
तस्मिन् परे लिखेत् सिंहं सर्व्व-लक्षण लक्षितम् ॥
रोचना सह चन्द्रेण हेम लेखन्या दूर्वया ।
प्रसादाच्चो लभानन्तु क्षितिं विस्तरनः करम् ॥
ध्वजापालन कर्तव्या दर्शयेद्विदक्षु देवताः ।
सर्व्वे वाहन-लांछेन लाञ्छिताः सहजेन वा ॥

Devī Pu, 35.4-8

वज्र धोजां तथा जप्ता अष्ठाविंशाक्षरापि वा ।
सिंह स्तम्भे समारोप्य सर्व्व मंगलशद्विताम् ॥
वेदध्वनि महामंत्रं कालिका चर्च्चिका पदम् ।
न्यस्य सिंह परं ध्यायेद् याहशं पूर्व्वकल्पितम् ॥

Devī Pu, 35.21-22

10. Banerjea, J.N., *Development of Hindu Iconography*, p. 92; also see John Irwin, *... and Archaeology Papers*, December 1974, pp. 1-13, One Gautamīputra also dedicated a similar *dhvaja* in the honour of Lord Vāsudeva. Banerjea, J.N., *op. cit.*, p. 92; Also see *Indian Archaeology*, 1965-66, p. 23.
11. *ASIAR*, 1913-14, pp. 188-91 Pl. LIII, LIV; Also 1914-15 p. 21 Pl. XVIC, The *Tāladhvaja* and *Mīnadhvaja* symbols are also represented in a few ancient coins. Banerjea, J.N., *Religion in Art and Archaeology*, p. 24.
12. See *ASIAR*, 1929-30 Pl. XXXI for its representation in relief.
13. *Indian Archaeology*, 1957-58, p. 54; Soundara Rajan, K.V., *Architecture of Early Hindu Temples of Andhra Pradesh*, p. 15.

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14. *Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum*, Vol. III, p. 141; It is interesting that a sand stone pillar crowned by a black basalt image of Garuḍa has been discovered at Bangarh. Goswami, K.G., *Excavations at Bangarh*, p. 3.
15. अर्धचन्द्र खण्ड खचित *Kādambarī*, p. 25; In *Caturbhāṇi* (P. 196) a person is described as preparing the *dhvaja* (वैजयन्ती) for the temple of Pradyumna. We hear of a *Sūrya-dhvaja* at Prayāg from Chinese traveller Beal, S., *Buddhists Records of the Western World*, Vol. I, p. 234.
16. *South Indian Inscriptions*, Vol. II. 2, p. 126.
17. *Pratimānāṭakam*, Act III before Śloka 5; In the *Caturbhāṇi* there is a reference to the preparation of the Dhvaja of Pradyumana.
18. *IA*, Vol. XIX, pp. 329-30.
19. गगनस्थश्च तत्रैव प्रांशु देवकुलाग्रतः ।
ददर्श शिलास्तम्भं चक्रोपरि लाञ्छितम् ॥
Kathāsaritasāgara, II, 4. 174.
20. *Agni Purāṇa*, 102. 1-7. In the above passage the terms flag and banner should be taken to mean standard.
21. Andre Bareau as quoted by John Irwin in *Burlington Magazine* Vol. CXV, November 1973, p. 716.
22. Andre Bareau as quoted by John Irwin, *op. cit.*, Vol. CXVII, October 1975, p. 632.
23. Coomaraswamy, Anand K., *History of Indian and Indonesian Art*, Pl. XIX 70; Zimmer, H., *The Art of Indian Asia*, pp. 253-54; also Cunningham, A., *The Stūpa of Bhārhut*, Pl. XII side, IX.2. An inscription from early Karle caves in fact recounts the erection of a lion pillar outside the Caitya. Dahejea, Vidya, *Early Buddhist Rock Temples*, p. 65.
24. John Irwin, *op. cit.*, Vol. CXV, p. 716.
25. Rock Edict. 7.
26. Legge, J., *The Travels of Fa-Hien*, pp. 50-51. It is interesting that here the traveller has confused an elephant with broken tusk as a lion.
27. *Ibid.*, p. 171.
28. "At the east gate of the Jetavāna monastery were two stone pillars one on each side of the entrance : there which were 70 feet high, had been erected by King Aśoka; the pillar on the left side was surmounted by a sculptured wheel and that on the right side by an ox." Watters, W.T., *On Yuan Chwang's Travels in India*, p. 383.
29. *Epigraphia India*, IX., p. 139.
30. Coomaraswamy, Anand K., *op. cit.*, p. 37.
31. *Ādi Purāṇa*, 22.
32. *Bṛhatsaṁhitā*, 43, 63-66.
33. *Agni Pu*, 102, 8-10.
34. *Ibid.*
35. *MB*, Karṇa, 49.95, 52.33.

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36. *Raghuvaṁśa*, V. 88.
37. *Kirātārjunīya*, x.7, *Daskumāracarita*, Chap. 2, p. 66.
38. *Ṛgveda*, I. 10.1
39. *Ram*, *Kiṣkindhā*, 16.37; Kane, P.V., *History of Dharmasastra*, Vol. II, pt. 2, pp. 25-26. It is rather strange that V.S. Agrawala (*Ancient Indian Folk Cult*) and S.P. Gupta (*Roots of Indian Art*) have termed this ceremony as folk. But the evidence furnished above suggests it to be a royal ceremony.
40. *MB*, Ādi, 57; *Bṛhatsaṁhitā*, 43.68.
41. *Rām*, Kiṣkindhā, 16.37.
42. *Bṛhatsaṁhitā*, 43; Also see *Samarāṅgaṇasūtradhara*, 17. Also *Devi Purāṇa*, Chap. 12.
43. *Nāgānanda*, *p. 4*.
44. *EHI*, Vol. II.2, p. 518; Dikshiter, however, dates *Śilappadikāram* in 2nd century A.D.
45. M. Joshi, (*JNSI*, 1957, p. 45 ff.) has touched upon this point in some detail. He equates the so-called standard of the Samudraguptas coins with the *Śakrādhavaja* described in *Bṛhatsaṁhitā* (Chap. 43). The basis of his thesis is, however, weak as the very presence of standard on the Samudragupta's coins in the left hand is doubtful.
46. Allan, J., *Catalogue of coins of ancient India*, p. 222 ff.
47. *Bṛhatsaṁhitā*, 43; *Viṣṇudharmottara Pu*, II. 156; *Agni Pu*, 192.6; *Avantisundarikathā*, p. 156; *Mṛchakaṭika*, V.II, X.7; *Rājamārtaṇḍa* of Bhoja in the *Annals of Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute*, Vol. 36; *Samarāṅgaṇasūtradhara*. XVII *Kṛtyakalpataru*, Vol. XI, p. 184.
48. *Rājataraṅgiṇī*, VIII. 170, 182, 495.
49. विजेतुः यदिवाञ्छस्ति दुर्ज्यवान द्वेषिणो रणे ।
तेजो बलं यशश्चाप्तुं तदैन्द्रं कारयेदध्वजम् ॥

Samarāṅgaṇa-sūtradhara, XVII. 17.

50. प्रचुरोद्धतध्वजविलम्बिवाससः

Śiśupālavadha, XIII. 49.

51. स्कम्भे लोकाः स्कम्भे तपः स्कम्भेऽध्यृतमहितम् ।
स्कम्भ त्वा वेद प्रत्यक्षमिन्द्रे सर्वं समहितम् ॥
इन्द्रे लोका इन्द्रा तप इन्द्रेऽध्यृतमाहितम् ।
इन्द्रं त्वां वेद प्रत्यक्षं स्कम्भे सर्वं प्रतिष्ठितम् ॥

Atharvaveda, 10.29-30.

52. क इमं दशभिर्मयेन्द्रं क्रीणाति धेनुभिः ।
यदा तृत्राणि जंघनदथैनं मे पुनर्ददत् ॥

Ṛgveda, IV. 24.10.

53. Kramrisch, S., *Art and Thought*, (Ed. Bharatha Iyer, K.) pp. 197-201; Also see Coomaraswamy, Ananda K., *History of Indian and Indonesian Art*, p. 41.

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54. According to Dange, Garuḍa was the motif of *Indra-dhvaja* since the Vedic times. He also associates *Kapi-dhvaja* with *Indra-dhvaja*. *Journal of Indian History*, Vol. 44, pp. 103-131.

55. तत्रापश्यन्महानीलं वैजयन्तं महाप्रभम् ।
ध्वजमिन्दीवरश्यामं वंशं कनकभूषणम् ॥

MB, Vana, 43.8.

ततः प्रयृति चाद्यापि यष्टयाः क्षितिपसत्तमैः ।
प्रवेशः क्रियते राजन यथातेन प्रवर्तितः ॥
अपरेद्युस्तया चास्याः क्रियते उच्छ्रयो नृपैः ।
अलंकृतायाः पिटकैर्गन्धैर्माल्यैश्च भूषणैः ॥
माल्यदामपरिक्षिप्ता विधिवत् क्रियतेऽपि च ।
भगवान पूज्यते चात्र हास्यरूपेण शंकरः ॥

MB, Ādi, 17. 19-21.

56. Elsewhere the reading हास्यरूपेण is met and Sukthankar accepts this reading as correct (*Bulletin of the Deccan College Research Institute*, Pt. 1, pp. 1-7). The reading Haṁsa however, appears mere acceptable because even in the *Ṛgveda* Haṁsa is related with the Indra. In this connection the observation of John Irwin is very significant. "On the abacuses of the pre-Aśokan pillars the celestial waters are symbolised by 'honey-suckle' or lotus motifs. Presiding over their circulation is the goose or Haṁsa (described in the *Ṛgveda* as 'companion of the never resting waters !) Because of this particular role, the Haṁsa was closely associated with Indra, who set the cycle in motion." Aśokan Pillars : a reassessment of the evidence, *Burlington Magazine*, Vol. CXXVIII, 1976 p. 744; Also see Agrawala, V.S., *Ancient Indian Folk Cults*, p. 52.

57. तं विष्णुतेजोद्भवमष्टचक्रे रथे स्थितम् भास्वति रत्नचित्रे ।
देदप्यिमानं शरदीय सूर्यं ध्वजं समासाद्य मुमोद शक्रः ॥
स किङ्किणीजालपरिष्कृतेन स्रकछत्रघन्टापिटकान्वितेन ।
समुच्छ्रितेनामरराड्ध्वजेन निन्ये विनाशं समरेऽरिसैन्यम् ॥

Brhatsaṁhitā, 43.6-7.

58. एष ह्यैन्द्रो वैजयन्तो गुणैर्नित्यं समाहितः ।
येनासुराव पराजित्य जगतपाति शतक्रतुः ॥

MB, Sabhâ, 55.19. (GP)

Bṛhatsaṁhitā (43) relates that *Indra-dhvaja* was granted to gods by Lord Viṣṇu. With its help Indra defeated the Daityas in war. According to *Samarāṅgaṇasūtradhara Śakra-dhvaja* was created to serve the purpose of the gods to destroy the demons.

सुराणामभंसिद्धयर्थं वधाय च सुरद्रुहाम् ।

Sam, 17.1.

59. शूलं शक्रध्वजोपमम्

Ram, Araṇya, 3.14.

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अपतद् देवराजस्य मुक्तरश्मिरिवध्वजः

Ram, Kiskindhā, 17.2.

महानमहेन्द्रस्य यथा स्वलंकृता इव ध्वजः

Ram, Kiskindhā, 34.3. Also 16.37.

60. आदाय परिघं घोरं पट्टोद्वद्धमयस्मयम् ।
राजतं राजतेऽर्थमिन्द्रध्वजमिवोच्छ्रितम् ॥

Vāmana Pu, 42.26.

(Taking up a formidable silver-white iron or copper mace, tied up with a strip of silk, (he) shone excellently like the hoisted up banner of Indra.)

61. "An interesting symbol is the triangle-headed standard of which there are several variants, but it appears to have been an ancient symbol having a link with the *Indra-dhvaja* or *Vaijayanti* standard sacred to Indra." Agrawala, V.S., *Indian Art*, p. 70.

62. पताका वैजयन्ती स्यात्केतनं ध्वजमस्त्रियाम् ।

Amarakośa, II.8.89.

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3

The Dhvaja (Standard) in Ancient India—A Survey

In the last chapter we saw how the *dhvaja* evolved from a simple totem into an object of faith. Subsequently it came to be closely associated with the religion of a people. But stationary *dhvaja* or say totem could not adequately serve the purpose of men at war or engaged in other ventures away from home. Man's desire to keep the symbol of his faith close to him on such occasions appears to have given birth to portable standards.

The Harappan Age

As stated earlier the authors of the Indus valley civilization (C2350-1700 BC) carried standards in war and in processions. According to John Marshall, Mohenjo-daro people held certain animals to be sacred, a cult object was associated with the chief of them, and both animal and cult objects were sometimes carried on standards in procession. This, to him, is strongly reminiscent of the practice of ancient Egypt where cult objects were always associated with the sacred or 'nome' animal carried there on standards.[1]

The type of *dhvaja* popular with the people of Mohenjo-daro comprised a staff, a bowl like receptacle and a cage (Pl. 2).[2] The staff made of metal or wood fixed in the ground ran through the bowl to the cage. The bowl either made of basket work or leather was appropriately held up by a pin. The principal motif of the *dhvaja i.e.* the *ketu* looks like

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a cage but admits of no easy iterpretation. Marshall suggests that it held a bird.[3] These standards were probably the rallying points for the people in war as well as in peace. A seal from Mohenjo-daro in fact represents four men in file each carrying a standard (Pl. 3). In ancient Egypt (3000 BC) the king in ceremonial processions and military expeditions was preceded by standard bearers. Interestingly, in a particular representation each of the bearers has between his feet the severed heads of defeated enemies.[4] The people of proto-historic India had also probably a similar use of the *dhvaja*.

The Vedic Age

We have already seen that the Vedic Āryans carried some sort of standard in war.[5] In fact among them the hoisting of the standard was very much connected with war and the march to the field necessarily followed its consecration. It is likely that some motif associated with India, the Vedic God of war, provided for *dhvaja* emblem[6] during this period.[7] There is also reason to believe that the adversaries of the Āryans also carried *dhvajas*. Rival forces did their best to destroy each others standards by directing missiles against them.[8]

The Epic Age

In the Epics the *dhvaja* occurs mainly in association with the charioteers. To understand the correct connotation of *dhvaja* in this age the observations made by Hopkins are very relevant. "We have next to distinguish between ensign (*dhvaja*) and banner (*patākā*). At the back of the car, perhaps on one side, rises a staff, straight up high from the floor. The main staff, I incline to think, was in the back middle of the car while the little flags were on the side. This staff bore the design or signum at its top and apparently below this top floated the flag. The flag pole was often the first objective point of the foe's arrows, which seem aimed not so much at the symbol as at the pole itself. Doubtless because the former was of metal and the latter of bamboo, though of course the ultimate purpose was to disgrace the knight by bringing down his symbol. When the symbol falls, the whole party . . . falls in dismay and disorder. On the top of the staff was placed the *dhvaja* or *ketu*; the former meaning sometimes the whole arrangement, staff, and image or banner; the later the symbol or banner alone."[9]

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The Epic *dhvaja* was thus a combination of *yaṣṭi* (staff), *ketu* (symbol) and *patākā* (banner). Significantly, the *dhvajas* represented in the early art of India also comprise these elements.[10]

Nanda Maurya Age (4th c BC to 2nd c BC)

The *dhvaja* continued to be in use in 4th century BC. With the army of king Paurava "an image of Herakles was borne in front of the line of infantry, and this acted as the strongest of all incentives to make the soldiers fight well. To desert the bearers of this image was reckoned as a disgraceful offence, and they had even ordained death as a penalty for those who failed to bring it back from the battlefield, for the dread which the Indians had conceived for the God when he was their enemy had been toned down to a feeling of religious awe and veneration."[11] Pāṇinī refers to *lakṣaṇa* or *aṅka* the distinguishing marks of the *saṁghas* or federations.[12] There is reason to believe that these marks were borne by the federations as a mark of distinction on their *dhvajas*.[13]

As we come to the Mauryan period we are on surer grounds. It is almost certain that the Aśokan pillars belong to the class of *dhvaja-stambhas*.[14] Behind the Aśokan pillars lies an older tradition of representing the portable sacred standard in art. *Dhvaja-stambhas* made of perishable material existed even before the time of Aśoka.[15]

A comparison of the Aśokan pillars with the Persipolitan columns suggests an identical approach in regard to the representation of *dhvaja* motifs in architectural forms. The motif 'two bulls running in opposite directions' which formed the standard of Darius, the Achamenid king, is widely represented in art.[16] Therefore, even though there is no concrete evidence that the motifs represented in Aśokan columns were used on his standard it can be presumed that such was the case. This is further confirmed by the discovery of *Garuḍa-stambha* of a Bhāgavata Heliodorous at Vidisā. In fact, evidence has come to light indicating that not one but eight such *dhvaja-stambhas* were erected by the Greek ambassador at Vidisā in front of the Viṣṇu temple traces of which have also been found.[17] Presumably the Garuḍa so widely represented by him in art also served as his *dhvaja* motif. Aśoka's portable standards bore one or other of the motifs represented in his columns. In the *Arthaśāstra* there is definite evidence that the *dhvajas* were carried in war and invariably displayed at the military camps.[18]

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The Sunga-Satavāhana Age (2nd c BC to 2nd c AD)

The most detailed depiction of *dhvajas* in ancient India is met with in the art of the Śuṅga-Sātavahāna period.[19] The *Triratna-dhvaja* is the most widely used standard of this period. It is generally portrayed at sacred precincts or in association with persons of high status. In the Śuṅga Art the *Triratna-dhvaja* (Pls. 10, 11), the *Cakra-dhvaja* (Pl. 12) and the *Garuḍa-dhvaja* (Pls. 8, 9) are widely met with.[20]

Numismatic sources are also immensely valuable in this regard. Many coin types datable prior to the second century BC bear a standard as their principal device. The punch marked coins from Kauśāmbī, Taxilā, Ujjain, Eran, etc. widely depict a symbol identified as *Jaya-dhvaja* (Pl. 5.1).[21] Besides this well known type, there are other types such as the *Matsya-dhvaja*[22] (Pl. 5.4) and the *Nandipāda-dhvaja*[23] (Pl. 5.3).

A circular design in a relief at Taxilā composed of six indents radiating from a central ring, akin to the six armed symbol of the punch marked coins, has also been indentified as a standard.[24] The device widely found on the coins of Audumbaras, has been identified as the *Triśūla-dhvaja*.[25] The "cock on the top of post" widely met with on the Ayodhyā coins[26] represents the *dhvaja* of Kārttikeya.[27] Some Kuṣāṇa coins also depict Skanda with a cock-standard in his right hand.[28]

The commonest type of standard depicted in the Sānchī reliefs is a *Triratna*. An oblong banner with stripes similar to those on the Union Jack accompanies this standard. Here it is noteworthy that some sort of drapery had come to be associated with the *dhvaja* by the second century BC (Pls. 7-12).[29] *Dhvajas* with drapery are widely depicted in Buddhist art of that period from widely separated regions like Bhāja, Sārnāth and Amarāvatī.[30] It seems that the *dhvaja* when carried in ceremonial or in war, was generally appended with drapery for ornamental purposes. This is exactly what Hopkins says about the shape of the *dhvaja* in the *Mahābhārata*.[31]

A very striking finding in this context is the female *dhvaja* bearer from Bhārhut dated around the beginning of the Christian era (Pl. 9). The lady riding a horse holds a staff surmounted by a winged figure and adorned with drapery flying behind as well as hanging below. An almost

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similar representation of the *dhvaja* is found in another panel (Pl. 8). The symbolism of these winged motifs held aloft on the pole is not known for certain but these could be interpreted as representing a *Garuḍa-dhvaja.* The so called Herakles standard carried in the forefront of Porus's army in 4th century BC[32] may have had a similar appearance.

The Gupta Age

That the basic form of the *dhvaja* in the Gupta period followed the traditional pattern is obvious from the coins. The *Garuḍa-dhvaja* as depicted on the gold coin of Samudragupta and his successors consists of a staff surmounted by the figure of the mythical bird *Garuḍa*, (Pls. 16, 17)[33] the King of the birds. The staff of the *dhvaja* was decorated with streamers. It was a portable representation of *Viṣṇu-dhvaja* erected by the Gupta monarchs in honour of Lord Viṣṇu. One such *dhvaja* was erected by Chandragupta Vikramāditya at Mehrauli in Delhi.[34] Another Gupta inscription pertaining to the reign of Buddhagupta refers to a *Dhvaja-stambha* of Janārdhanā at Eran.[35] Two more *Dhvaja-stambhas* of the Gupta rulers have been discovered at Prahladpur and Gazipur.[36]

Besides the well known *Garuḍa-dhvaja* some Gupta kings *viz.*, Candragupta I, Samudragupta and Kumāragupta also patronised the *Candra-dhvaja* (Crescent standard) (Pl. 14). The *Cakra-dhvaja* (wheel standard) was widely used by Kāca[37] (Pl. 15). It was also patronised by Jayanāga[38] a ruler of Bengal in 7th century A.D. The Hūṇa king Toramāṇa preferred a *Sūrya-dhvaja*[39] whereas his predecessor Mihirakula displayed a *Vraṣabha-dhvaja.*[40] An unidentified coin of the late Gupta period depicts a *Haya-dhvaja* (horse-headed standard).[41]

A large number of coins issued by Samudragupta have been named as "Standard Type" on the basis of the device identified as *Jaya-dhvaja*, held by the king in his left hand. This so called *Jaya-dhvaja* is portrayed on the coins of the Gupta kings in three forms[42] :

1. The staff crowned by a bar-like motif;
2. the staff crowned by a bar-like motif and elaborated with a streamer;
3. the staff elaborated with a streamer but without a crowning motif.

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This motif in all its forms can, however, be better explained as a sceptre rather than a standard.[43] Chatterjee holds that while the first and third forms cannot be classed as *dhvajas*, the presence of a streamer places the second form in that class.[44] However, the streamer alone is no criterion for categorising the motif a *dhvaja*. Further, if Chatterjee's inference is accepted there is no way to explain the presence of two standards on the obverse of many Gupta coins where the staff with streamer appears together with the Garuḍa standard.[45]

A unique fifth century terra-cotta plaque from Ahicchatra represents two standards—a *Varāha-dhvaja* (bear-standard) and a *Candra-dhvaja* (crescent-standard)[46] (Pl. 19). These accompany two warriors, identified as Jayadratha and Yudhiṣṭhira, engaged in a battle. In both the cases the *dhvajadaṇḍa* is decorated with ribbons flying on either side just below the crowning motif. The shape of these *dhvajas* is very much akin to those depicted in the art of *Bhārhut*. These bear exact resemblance to the *dhvaja* represented on the Gupta coins.

The depiction of the *dhvaja* in the Ajaṇṭā art is almost in line with the traditions met with in Bhārhut and Sānchī. The main point of difference is that here the surmounting motif is a disc with *Camara* instead of *triratna* symbol, and the banner is long and colourful. Griffith says "Banners and ensigns although painted in somewhat sombre colours green, brown and grey were important part of military pomp. At the top of a slender staff about 8 or 9 feet long is a bordered disc, probably of metal with three yak or horse tail tassels on the top and sides. Below this hangs a short horizontal bar, from which floats a longitudinally striped swallow tailed banner about six or eight feet long. In some cases the head of the flag staff is an ornamental spear with turned mouldings. Sometimes a narrow scarf is tied to a staff bearing but a single horse tail, the two ends enriched by cross stripes, hanging in fluttering folds."[47] Incidentally, no motif appears on the drapery of the *dhvaḍas*. That such types continued even in the post-Gupta period is evident from the Bhuvaneśvara sculptures. Here the *Dhvaja-paṭṭa* is invariably triangular and of plain ground and the staff is surmounted, according to the religious faith of the people who bore it, either by a trident or a discus.[48] The picture of the *dhvaja* in some Ajaṇṭā murals resembles the description of *Garuḍa-dhvaja* in the *Śiśupālavadha*[49]

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The Post-Gupta Age

The most remarkable development in the evolution of the *dhvaja* occurred when the crowning motif came to be represented on the *dhvaja-paṭṭa* or flag. This probably happened sometime after the Guptas. The *Agni Purāṇa* attests to this while stating that the flag should be impressed in the middle with the mark of a circle, the figure of the celestial bird (*Garuḍa*) or that of the *Narasiṁha* manifestation of Viṣṇu being worked on the space within the aforesaid circle—the rod being left always unpainted.[50] Epigraphic evidence also suggests that "The crest or the symbol were drawn on cloth and fixed to a rod and were carried either by hand or attached to the chariot and *howdah*."[51] This is further corroborated by the *Naiṣadhacarita* which refers to the flags bearing the figures of horse, elephant or tiger.[52]

The *Yuktikalpataru*, a work of the 10th century, gives a detailed description of the *dhvaja*. This account and information given by later sources like Kuṇḍārka and Hemacandra suggest that the terms *patākā* and *dhvaja* had now become almost synonymous. Though it is clearly stated that *patākā* was triangular and *dhvaja* quadrilateral in shape,[53] both words are often used in identical sense in later literature. In the *Yuktikalpataru*, *dhvaja* is classified as *sapatāka* and *niṣpatāka*.[54] Further some *dhvajas* bore symbols whereas others did not. Probably rulers and generals used the *dhvajas* with motifs bearing their personal symbols.[55]

The shape of the *dhvaja* in the 13th century is best indicated in a procession scene depicted in the Raichur fort. The six chariots drawn by humped bulls are ornamented with flags of various designs and symbols, streaming behind in the breeze presenting a delightful picture (Pl. 35).[56] A relief from Charbangla temple also shows a marching military column led by a standard-bearer in the forefront (Pl. 33).

The above survey of the *dhvaja* in ancient India thus indicates four stages of evolution.

(*i*) The early or first stage when the motif was carried on the staff.

(*ii*) The second stage when cloth was added to the *dhvaja-yaṣṭi* probably for reasons of ornamentation and utility.

(*iii*) The third stage when the motif was carried on the top of the staff as well as on the cloth or flag till it was realised that with

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the impressioning of the motif on the cloth its representation at the top was redundant.

(*iv*) The fourth stage when the *dhvaja* motif was impressed on the cloth. This was probably the stage when *dhvaja* and *patākā* came to be treated as synonymous.

Thus the *dhvaja* evolving from the totem, assumed a religious character,[57] was adopted by the military leader as a valued symbol of tribal unity and eventually became a state emblem.

Patākā (Flag)

A word on *patākā* may not be out of place here because its evolution is very much connected with that of the *dhvaja*. Both words often occur together in literature and are taken to mean the same by lexicons. However, originally, there was a big difference in the meaning, make and display of the two.[58]

In the Epics the *patākā* is described as commonly used by charioteers, elephant riders and cavalry men. It seems *patākās* were hung around the chariot for ornamental purposes.[59] However, the use of some sort of a staff for the display of the flag at least in the case of elephant and horse riders cannot be ruled out. In fact in the *Mahābhārata*, *patākā* appears primarily as a feature of horsemen[60] though occasionally the elephant riders, who often displayed a *dhvaja*, also carried it.[61] An early reference to *patākā* appears in the *Arthaśāstra* where it occurs in conjunction with the *dhvaja*.[62] Though the details of its use and display are not given in this text, it was certainly not meant to serve the same purpose as *dhvaja*. Its use for military purposes was, however, equally important.

Patākās were made of various colours such as yellow, red, white and black and bore on them the symbols of the sun, the moon and the stars.[63] These symbols were common to *patākās* of graded and ungraded warriors alike.[64] There is no definite indication as to the shape and size of the *patākās* in early literature but presumably these were small in size and triangular in shape.

In a text of relatively later date the *patākā* is defined as triangular in contrast to *dhvaja* which was rectangular.[65] Elsewhere it is stated that "a *patākā* should be half the dimension of a *Mahā-dhvaja* except that the breadth at its extremity should measure 20 fingers only.[66] The *patākā*

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appears to have originated as a decorative flag with little symbolic significance. It came to be identified with the *dhvaja* in course of time when the practice of imprinting the *paṭākā* with the motif came into vogue.

REFERENCES

1. Marshall, J., *Mohenjo-daro and the Indus Civilization*, p. 385. There is also evidence of standard earlier in Kulli Culture. On a Kulli ware a bull is represented before a pillar and tied to it with a cord. The pillar comprises a shaft, a bulbous pot and a circular object with twelve spokes put one above another. The whole combination is surmounted by a four cornered rectangular frame. Piggot, S., *Pre-historic India*, fig 7 facing p. 102. The device can rightly be identified as Kulli-standard because it bears a close resemblance to the Harappan standard. E.J.H. Mackay has also found the use of standard among the Jhukar people. On a seal discovered from Chanbu-daro two nude women are represented carrying an standard each. *Chanbu-daro Excavations*, Pl. 11.36, pp. 149-50.

2. There are numerous specimen of the type on the seals. Marshall, J., *op. cit.*, pl. XIII, 18-19; Mackay, E.J.H., *Further Excavations at Mohenjo-daro*, Pl. XCI, 2; also Pl. LXXIX A; also Vats, M.S., *Excavations at Harappa*, Vol. II., Pl. XCIII, 309, 320, 321. Mackay has interpreted two terra-cotta animal heads from Mohenjo-daro as part of a standard. *Further Excavations at Mohenjo-daro*, Vol. I, p. 299; Vol. II, pls. 74.8, 78.6.

3. Marshall, J., *op. cit.*, pp. 383-384; At another, place Marshall identified it as incense burner. *ibid.*, p. 69. According to V.S. Agrawal "The most frequently represented ox-like beast with a single horn usually described as unicorn (*Ekśriṅga*) may be identified with *Śriṅga-Vṛisha* (*RV*, VIII. 17.13, *AV*, 20.5.7) In front of the animal is a curious object which seems to be standard, or banner with a religious significance. In almost all examples the banner consists of three distinct parts *viz.* a round tapering shaft, a bowl like top which is either pimpled like the seed vessel of a lotus or with fluted ribs, and a square or round *Vedikā*. The bowl like object may be a *Kuṇḍa* from which the deity symbolised as the unicorn (*Sṛiṅga Vṛisha*) quaffed his portions of an exhilarating drink.

   ,...The shaft surmounted by a bowl or cauldron (*chamasa* or *charu*) and supporting on its top a railed structure, both open to the sky and also having a domed roof, appear to be deliberately designed as an outstanding symbol or banner of a deity.... The *Yūpa* and *stūpa* and the present banner sign on the unicorn seals appear to repeat the same elements of symbolism removed in time drom one another. With this analysis in view the Indus Valley Banner seems to be the earliest form of a pillar, *skabha* dedicated to a deity." *Indian Art*, pp. 33-34. For a correct understanding it would be better to read standard in the place of banner in the above passage.

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4. Woldering, I., *The Art of Egypt*, Pl. 6 and Cat. 67.

5. Many scholars identify the Vedic standard as a flag. See Talcherkar, H.A., *Modern Review*, August 1924, P. 147; Date G.T. *The Art of War in Ancient India*, p. 25; Pandey, R., *Prachina Bharata Ki Samgramikata*, p. 3; Majumdar, B.K., *Military System in Ancient India*, p. 18; *Hindi Visva kosa*, Vol. VI, p. 206. Dikshitar, V.R.R., *War in Ancient India*, p. 374; Dange S.A. *Journal of Indian History*, Vol. 44, P. 125 ff.

   The English rendering of some words like *akra* (*RV*, III. 1.12 1, 143.7), *ketu* (*RV*, 1.27, 11-12, I. 119.1, V.8.2) *drapsa* (*RV*, IV. 3.2) and *dhvaja* (*RV*, VII. 85.2, X.103.11, *AV*, V. 21.12) met in the Vedic literature, as flag and banner have led to this belief. In fact the term *ketu* often met as an adjective of Agni means 'light' or 'shinning' or at best a distinguishing mark'. Similarly, the interpretation of the terms *akra* and *drapsa* as flag is etymologically wrong. The *dhvaja* on the other hand, means a standard and not a flag. Indeed *dhvaja* or standard alone and not the flag was known to the Vedic Aryans.

6. S.A. Dange (*Journal of Indian History*, Vol. 44, pp. 128-29) also holds that some representation of Indra—the War God—was erected and carried at the advance of the army like that of Agni. The reasons furnished by him for reaching this conclusion are not convincing. He even identifies the Vedic *dhvaja* with the *Indra-dhvaja* and the later *Garuḍa* and *Kapi dhvaja* pp. 129-132.

7. अस्माकमिन्द्रः समृतेषु ध्वजेष्वस्माकं मा इसवस्ता जयन्तु *RV*, X.103 11, Also 19.13.11 (When the banners (should be standards) are intermingled, may Indra be our (defender) maythose arrows which are ours be victorious.

8. स्पर्धन्ते वाउ देवहूये अत्र येजु ध्वजेसु दिद्यवः पतन्ति
   RV, VII, 85.2

   (In the conflict where (combatants) strive against us, in those (contests) in which bright (weapons) fall upon the banners.

9. Hopkins, E.W., *The Position of the Ruling caste in Ancient India*, pp. 187-188; In this thesis the term Patākā has been used in two senses—patākā as a component of *dhvaja* and *patākā* as independent of *dhvaja*.

10. यत्रैषा काञ्चनी वेदी प्रदीप्ताग्निशिखोपमा ।
    उच्छ्रिता काञ्चने दण्डे पताकाभिरलङ्कृता ॥
    MB, Virāṭa, 53.1.

    In appearance the epic *dhvaja* may not have been much different from those met with in the art of Bhārhut and Sānchī. In this connection the representation of *dhvaja* in the art of Halebid and Puspagiri, depicting the war scenes from the *Mahābhārata* (Pls. 29-32) is also notable.

11. Mc Crindle, *Ancient India, Its Invasion by Alexander the Great*, pp. 208-209. There is some controversy about the identification of this Herakles. Coomaraswamy suggests that it was an image of Śiva or Yakṣa. *History of Indian and Indonesian Art*, pp. 42 fn. 5.

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J.N. Banerjea, identifies it with Kṛṣṇa, *Comprehensive History of India*, Vol. II, p. 383.

A.M. Shastri, however, calls it a Likapāla. *Journal of Indian History*, Vol. 42, p. 125. The Romans also held their standard in great veneration. "The attachment of Roman troops to their standards was inspired by the united influence of religion and of honour. The golden eagle, which glittered in front of the legion, was the object of their fondest devotion; nor was it esteemed less impious than it was ignomious to abandon that sacred ensign in the hour of danger." Gibbon, E., *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, Vol. 1, p. 10. Also see Pl. 1. Standards were placed in a chapel in the camp and with the other deities received the religious worship of the troops.

12. *Aṣṭādhyāyī*, IV. 3.127.

13. In the *Mahābhārata* Arjuna's Chariot is described as (कपिलक्षणम्) *Mahābhārata*, Adi, 55.37.

According to Dr. V.S. Agrawal "the *lakṣaṇa* denoted the heraldic symbols or marks of a saṁgha, which they employed on their coins, seals and banners etc.... *Aṅka* seems to stand for the legend adopted by the states.... *Lakṣaṇa* is the same as lāñchana or heraldic crest of the later Sanskrit."

India as known to Pāṇinī, p. 433, V.S. Agarwal has given no reason for interpreting *aṅka* as legend. K.P. Jayaswal takes the *lakṣaṇa* to be the 'royal' or 'state' mark and the *aṅka* 'the individual mark' of a prince. The latter could even mean the legend or the motto adopted by the ruler. *Hindu Polity*, p. 27. According to S.K. Chakravorti the main distinction between the two seems to be that *lakṣaṇa* is national and *aṅka* personal in significance. *JRASB* (letters), 1936, p. 55. On the other hand we have definite evidence that *aṅka* indicated the symbol borne on *dhvaja* or *dhvaja* itself such as *Vṛṣabhāṅka*.

14. Mitra, A.K., *Journal and Proceedings of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, Vol. XXIX 1933, p. 317.

15. Irwin, John, *Burlington Magazine*, Vol. CXVI, December 1974 p. 715; Also see Agrawala, V.S., *Indian Art*, p. 93 ff.

16. Ghirshman, R , *Persia from the origin to Alexander the Great.* Figs. 261, 263 etc.

17. Indian Archaeology, 1965-1966, p. 23.

18. तूर्यध्वजपताकाभिर्व्यूहसंज्ञाः प्रकल्पयेत् ।
स्थाने याने प्रहरेण सैन्यानां विनये रतः ॥

AS, II; 33.11; Also 10.6.46;

Elsewhere in the *Arthaśāstra*, we have the compound देवध्वजप्रतिमाभिर्वा (XIII.3.45) The associates the *dhvaja* with a temple. A *dhvaja* which was indeed a sanctified object, was raised at the Skandhāvāra

स्कन्धावारादुच्छ्रितध्वजधन्वारक्षो

As XIII.4.15

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Kangle (*AS*, II, p. 181, 452) and Shamasastry (*AS*, p. 157) have translated the words *dhvaja* and *patākā* as flag and banner respectively, I, however, think that the compound should be translated as standard and banner. Otherwise, it would be difficult to explain the occurrence of two words conveying the same sense together. The classification advanced by Kangle that *dhvaja* is a big flag, while *Patākā* is smaller also does not look satisfactory.

19. Cunningham, A., *The Stūpa of Bhārhut*, pl. VII. In the contemporary art of Mathurā the pillars are crowned with *Triratna-dhvaja* and accompanied by huge streamers. Coomaraswamy, A.K., *History of Indian and Indonesian Art*. Pl. XIX, 70. Also our Pls. 6, 12, 13.
20. For a typical *dhvaja* at Sānchi see Maisey, F.C., *Sānchī and its Remains*, Pl. XXVII.
21. Prinsep, J., *JASB*, 1935; p. 623; Allen, J., catalogue of coins of Ancient India, pp. XXXIII-XXXIV and Pls. Some scholars have identified it in Gupta coins as well. Chatterjee, C.D. *JUPHS*, 1957, p. 44.
22. Allan calls it a 'fish-headed standard', *op. cit.*, p. 229.
23. This is generally termed *Nandipāda* symbol. Allan, J., *op. cit.*, XCIII, CIV; This is the type which is widely met in the Art of Sānchi and elsewhere, Pls. 7, 10, 11. We have generally termed it as *Triratna-dhvaja*.
24. Walsh, F. Hc., *Memoirs of the Archaeological Survey of India*, No. 59, 1939, p. 2.
25. Chakraborti, S.K. *JRASB* (Letters), 1936, p. 63; For details on symbols on tribal coins, see p. 53.
26. Allan, J., *op. cit.*, pp. 135-139, Pl. XVII-XVIII.
27. Smith, V.A., *CCIMC*. p. 151; Also see Kanchan Sinha, *Kārttikeya in Indian Art and Literature*, p. 112.
28. Gardner, P., *Catalogue of the Coins of Graco-scythian Kings of Bactria and India*, Pl. XXVIII. 16, p. 138, pl. XXVIII. 22, 23, p. 149. Cock, the harbinger of the rising sun probably came to be associated with Kārttikeya because the latter was a solar deity.
29. Interestingly, this is quite in line with the developments in other parts of the world. See *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (ninth edition), Vol. IX, p. 277.
30. Bachhofer, L., *Early Indian Sculpture*, Vol. II, Pl. 131; Zimmer, H., *Art of Indian Asia*, Pl. 42; Sahni, D.R., *Catalogue of the Museum of Archaeology at Sārnāth*, Pl. V.
31. Hopkins, E.W., *Position of the Ruling Caste in Ancient India*, pp. 187-189.
32. McCrindle, *Ancient India, its Invasion by Alexander the Great*, pp. 208-209.
33. The Gupta rulers Samudragupta, Chandragupta, Kumārgupta, Skandagupta, Ghatotkachagupta, Narasimhagupta, Buddhagupta, Viṣṇugupta, Vainyagupta and Prakāśāditya represent Garuḍa on their coins. Altekar, A.S., *The Gupta Gold Coins in the Bayānā Hoard*, Pls.
34. Fleet, J.F., *Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum*, Vol II, p. 141.
35. *Ibid*, p. 89; Fleet has translated *Dhvaja-stambha* as a flag staff. This should better be translated as "pillar of the standard."

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36. Narain, A.K., *The Excavation at Prahladpur*, p. 6.

37. Also Altekar, A.S , *The Gupta Gold Coins in the Bavana Hoard*, Pls. VI. 11-15, VII. 1-10.

38. *Al*tekar, A S , *The Coinage of the Gupta Empire*, Pl. XIX A. 11.13.

39. Choudhry, R., *Journal of the Ganga Nath Jha Research Institute*, Vol. XXVI, p. 176; A copper coin from Avanti also represents a king with a sun standard on the left. *Indian Museum, Catalogue of Coins.* Vol. I, Pl. XX. 2.

40. *Ibid.*, p. 178.

41. Altekar, A.S., *op. cit.*, Pl. XXXII, 14.

42. Allan first named them as standard type. Altekar also agreed with him. Some scholars, however, doubt the very basis of the nomenclature 'standard type' and others accept it with reservations. For a detailed discussion on the point see *Journal of the UP Historical Society*, 1957, p. 51 ff.

43. Referring to one of these types of Candragupta II, P.L. Gupta says "the object in the king's left hand is identical with that held by the king on the so called standard type of Samudragupta. Allan has described it as standard; but that does not seem to be correct description. Indian tradition never favours the king being his own standard bearer. Kings, however, are frequently represented as carrying sceptres in their hand and I, therefore, have described this object as *rājā-daṇḍa* or sceptre." *Journal of the Numismatic Society of India*, Vol. IX, p. 145, fn. 1. B.C. Chhabra also describes this object as a staff of authority and not a standard. *Ibid.*, Vol. XI, p. 25. Incidentally, on the obverse of many Gupta coins the so called *Jaya-dhvaja* and *Garuḍa-dhvaja* figure together. Since nothing would justify the presence of two *dhvajas* together on the same coin the alternative would be to explain the so called *Jaya-dhvaja* as any thing but a *dhvaja*. Sceptre seems to be the most acceptable explanation for it. It is also remarkable that the sceptre is represented almost in the same fashion on the coins of the foreign rulers from whom the Guptas took their inspiration.

44. Chatterjee refuses to accept some of these as standard type because they do not display a streamer. "These coins which come under the second (our first) category because of the fact that the staff like object has been depicted without its component, the 'banner' or 'flag' have justly no claim to be assigned to the standard type series, for the simple reason that no royal standard as such has been depicted on them." *CUPHS*, 1957, p. 52).

Chatterjee has taken the banner which is actually an appendage to the *dhvaja*, for *dhvaja* itself. In fact the use of drapery or streamers in the Gupta coins is simply a decorative device often associated with the weapons as well. (See Altekar, A.S., *The Coinage of the Gupta Empire* Pls. I.4, II.I etc.) The drapery so used cannot be treated as *dhvaja* or *patākā* in its own right. What is all the more significant is that such streamers also decorated the sacrificial post or *yûpa* in the Gupta age. (Altekar, A.S., *Ibid.*, p. 62). In some cases the streamers were also used as appendage to the head dress of the warriors. (See Pl. 10; also Altekar, *op. cit.*, Pl. VII. 2.3.6.7 etc.). Thus the streamers by themselves do not signify a *dhvaja.*

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45. Altekar has also referred to the presence of *Cakra-dhvaja* side by side with *Garuḍa-dhvaja* (*The Gupta Gold Coins in the Bayana Hoard*, VII.11). But a closer view may suggest that it is not *Cakra-dhvaja* at all. The staff of this so called *dhvaja* is quite unlike others and the presence of fillet is no guide to its being a *dhvaja*.

46. The plaque is exhibited in the National Museum, New Delhi, with the caption 'Yudhiṣṭhira and Jayadratha'. There is a view that the warriors represent the *Kirāṭārjunīyam* story in which Śiva as a wild hunter had to take up arms, against Arjuna and establish his right to a boar. Another suggestion is that the contest between Harṣa and Pulkesin (who had a boar *dhvaja*) supplied the theme for it. For details see *Ancient India*, No. 4, p. 171.

47. Griffith, K., *The Paintings in the Buddhist Cave Temples of Ajaṇṭā*, p. 15.

48. Mitra, R.K., *Antiquities of Orissa*, Vol. 1, p. 364.

49. विभ्राणया वहलयावकपङ्कपिङ्गपिच्छावचूडमनुमाधवधाम जग्मुः ।
चञ्चच्चग्रदष्टचटुलाहिपताकयान्ये स्ववासमागमुरगाशन केतुयष्ट्या ॥
Śiśupālavadha, V. 13.

50. अण्डोर्ध्वं कलशं न्यस्य तदर्ध्वं विन्यसेद्ध्वजम् ।
विम्वार्धमानं दण्डस्य त्रिभागेणाथ कारयेत् ॥
अष्टारं द्वादशारं वा मध्ये मूर्तिमताडन्वितम् ।
नारसिंहेन तार्क्ष्येण ध्वजदण्डस्तु निव्रणः ॥
Agni Pu, 61. 29-30.

51. Rice, B.L., *Mysore Inscriptions*, p. 33.

52. हरिद्विपद्वीपिभिरांशुकैर्नभोनभस्वदाध्मापनपीनितैरभूत् ।
तरस्वदश्वध्वजिनीध्वजैर्वनं विचित्रचीनाम्बरवल्लिवेल्लितम् ॥
Naiṣadhacarita, 16.6.

53. त्रिकोण वै पताकास्यु चतुष्कोण ध्वजा स्मृता ।
Vācaspatyam, p. 4212.

54. गजादिन्युक्ता सा प्रोक्ता जयन्ती सर्वमङ्गला ।
गजः सिंहो हयो द्विपो चतुर्णां पृथ्वी-भुजाम् ॥
हंसादि-युक्ता विज्ञेया राज्ञा सैवाष्टमङ्गला ।
हंसः केकी शुकः चासो ब्रह्मादीनां यथाक्रमम् ॥
चामरादि समायुक्ता सा ज्ञेया सर्ववृद्धिदा ।
चामरश्चास-पक्षानि चित्रवस्त्रं तथा सितम् ॥
चतुर्णां वेदनयन-पक्षास्तवं गणिताः क्रमात् ।
तद्गे यदि विन्यस्तं पताका द्वितयं भवेत् ॥
इयं हि सर्वतोभद्रा पताका चक्रवर्तिनः ।
तद्वर्णः पूर्ववज् ज्ञेयः प्रमाण विधिवोधितम् ॥

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कानकं राजतं ताम्रं नाना धातुमयं क्रमात् ।
कुम्भादिकं प्रशंसन्ति पताकोग्र महीभुजाम् ॥
अत्रापि रत्नविन्यासो विधेयो रजत-क्रमः ।
चतुर्भिम्भकरास्याद्यैर्युक्ता चेत् सर्व्व-सिद्धिदा ॥
तदाश्रेयस्करी नाम सापताका विजायते ।
मकरोऽथ गज सिंहः व्याघ्रो वाजी मृगः शुकः ॥
शुचिश्चेति समुद्दिष्टमादित्यादि-दशाभुवाम् ।
इति प्रोक्तः पताकानां निर्णयः पृथ्वीभुजाम् ॥

Yuktikalpataru, p. 69.

55. सेना चिन्हं क्षितीशानां दण्डोध्वज इति स्मृतः ।
सपताको निष्पताकः सज्ञेयो द्विविधो वुधैः ॥

Ibid., p. 68.

56. *Annual Report of the Archaeological Department*, Hyderabad, 1929-30, Pl. XII. b. p. 8.

57. There is a likelihood that in the primitive society *shaman* might have used it for ecclesiastical purposes. Its use for temporal purpose probably came afterwards.

58. पताका वैजयन्ती स्यात्केतनंध्वजमस्त्रियाम् ।

Amarakośa, II. 8.99.

According to V.S. Agrawal, *Vaijayanta* was a triangle-headed standard. The basis of this supposition is not, however, known.

59. स तं नानापताकाभिः शोभितं रथ सत्तमम् ।

MB, Ādi, 224.17;

पताकिनं रत्नविभूजितध्वजम् ।

Rām, Sun, 47.4.

ने ध्वजा संवृतास्तेजां पताकाभिः समन्ततः ।

MB, Droṇa, 80.5.

एतेजामपि दयिन्तां रथा ध्वजपताकिनः ।

MB, Virāta, 30.20.

इन्द्रायुधसवर्णाभा पताका भरतर्जभ ।
दोधूयमाना रथिनां शोभयन्ति महारथान् ॥

MB, Droṇa, 80.7.

60. *MB*, Udyoga, 155.19, Bhiṣma, 101.9.

61. *MB*, Bhiṣma, 44.7.

62. ध्वजपताकाभिः

AS, II. 33.11; Also II, 10.6, XIII. 3.15, XIII. 4.15.

63. पतिरक्तासितासितास्ताराचन्द्रार्कमण्डिताः

MB, Karṇa, 43.57; Also 31.50.

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64. The banners with these symbols were littered on the battle ground. *Mahābhārata*, Karṇa, 43.57. Arjuna and Yudhiṣṭhira also had these signs on their *patākās*. Karṇa 31.50; Droṇa, 22.56 Interestingly, the *dhvajas* represented in the art of Bhārhut and Sānchi bear these symbols on their flags.

65. त्रिकोण वै पताकास्यू चतुस्कोण ध्वजा स्मृता

Vācaspatyam, p. 4212.

66. *Agni-Purāṇa*, 61. 34-35. (20 fingers equal to 15 inches).

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4

Constituents of Dhvaja

In its fully evolved form the *dhvaja* consisted of the following parts : *ketu*, *patākā*, *rajju* and *yaṣṭi*.

Dhvaja-ketu

The *ketu* by which is meant the crowning motif was the basic component of a *dhvaja*. Among the Indus valley people the *dhvaja* motifs comprised animal heads, unicorn and the incense burner. We have already seen that the incense burner was originally associated with the cult of unicorn. Subsequently the incense burner itself became an object of worship or veneration.[1]

In the *Ṛgveda* there are references to *dhvaja* but not to *Dhvaja-ketus*. However, in the *Atharva-veda* there is a reference to a *dhvaja* named *Sūrya-ketu*.[2]

In the Epics warriors appear using various motifs in their *dhvajas*. The selection of a motif by an individual often depended on his religious leanings. Garuḍa, the vehicle of Viṣṇu, was adopted by Śrī Kṛṣṇa to crown his *dhvaja*. An image of *Kapi*, the monkey warrior, Hanumān, of *Rāmāyaṇa* fame, formed the crest of Arjuna's *dhvaja*. *Vṛṣabha-dhvaja*, *Varāha-dhvaja*, *Siṁha-dhvaja*, *Śarabha-dhvaja*, *Haṁsa-dhvaja*, *Mayūra-dhvaja*, *Śāraṅga-dhvaja* are other examples in this category.

The plant world provided motifs like the Tāla and Kovidāra trees. Some warriors chose objects like *sītā* (the farrow-line), *yūpa* (a post),

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kamaṇḍalu, (water-jar), *śṛṅga* (horn), *cakra* (wheel), etc. as insignia for their *dhvajas*.[3]

In the case of some warriors, more than one *dhvaja* is mentioned. King Yudhiṣṭhira's *dhvaja* is described as bearing the moon and the stars symbol[4] at one place and a pair of drums[5] at another. Similarly, Ghaṭotkacha's *dhvaja* is said to carry the image of a chariot wheel in one context[6] and a ferocious bird in another.[7] Whether the two *dhvajas* were carried separately or jointly is not, however, known.

In the 4th century BC Indian armies carried a standard which bore the image or a divine figure.[8] The Aśokan columns are often capped with symbols of Buddhist significance like elephant, horse, lion and bull.

In early Buddhist art of India a *triśūla* like object frequently appears as a *dhvaja* motif.[9] This has been explained as an elemental symbol—a monogram composed of Pālī letters *ya*, *la*, *ba*, *va*, *sa*, *na* representing air, fire, water, mount *Sumeru* and mind.[10] Others take it as representing *triratna* or the triple gem *i.e. Buddha*, *Dhamma* and *Saṁgha*.[11] Whatever the symbolism, the motif seems to be a very sacred object in the Buddhist tradition. Significantly, this symbol is depicted in the inscriptions and coins of some foreign rulers as well.[12] The art of Bhārhut also depicts a winged figure, identifiable with Garuḍa, as a *Dhvaja-ketu* (Pls 8, 9).

The Gupta rulers chose the *Garuḍa* for their *dhvaja*. It occurs in the coins of almost all the important rulers of the dynasty[13] (Pls 16, 17). The Gupta royal seal also bore the *Garuḍa* emblem.[14] The Mehrauli pillar inscription generally associated with Candragupta II refers to the erection of a *Garuḍa-dhvaja* there.[15] The Gupta rulers were Vaiṣṇavas and therefore, *Garuḍa* the vehicle of Lord Viṣṇu was an object of adoration to them. The *Garuḍa* motif is variously represented in the Gupta standards.[16] In the gold coins it generally figures as a plump bird with attractive wings surmounting a staff. Some copper issues, however, represent the bird with outspread wings and adorned human arms. Some types omit the arms. A terra-cotta seal of Kumāragupta I even represents it as human-faced. Besides the *Garuḍa* some Gupta rulers also used *candra* (crescent) and *cakra* (wheel) motifs in their standards (Pls. 14, 15).

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In Ajanta frescoes the *cakra* is very widely represented as a *Dhvaja-ketu* (Pls. 21, 22). Here it appears to be a substitute for the *triratna* symbol of the early Buddhist art. It Bhuvanesvara the *cakra* and *trisula ketus* were popular.[17]

Many of these *dhvaja* motifs were adopted by later Indian rulers. Maukharis chose a *cakra* or a *vṛṣabha*.[18] Śaśāṅkadeva of *Garuḍa* had a vṛṣabha.[19] Earlier the Hūṇa King Mihirkula displayed on his silver coins a recumbent bull on the top of a staff with a legend *Jayatu vṛṣa-dhvajah* i.e. may the bull-standard be victorious.[20] The Viṣṇu-Kuṇḍins, the contemporary southern Indian rulers chose the *siṁha* (Pl. 26). The Pallavas followed them and were in turn copied by the Kadambas.[21] Earlier the lion symbol had been popular with the Andhras as well.[22] The Cālukyas preferred a *varāha* (pl. 24).[23] Among other southern Indian dynasties, the Pāṇḍyas displayed a fish, Colas a tiger and the Ceras a bow on their *dhvajas* (Pl. 28).[24]

The device which was used for the *lāñchana* or emblem of a kingdom occasionally served as a *dhvaja* motif as well. *Garuḍa* motif was common to the *dhvaja* (standard) and *lāñchana* (emblem) of the Gupta dynasty. The Vardhanas of Thānesar who used a *vṛṣabha-lāñchana* probably used a *Vṛṣabha-dhvaja* as well.[25] The Pallavas bore *Vṛṣabha-lāñchana*. In the Kasakudi Plate the Pallava king Nandivarman II describes his predecessor Parameśvara Varmā as *Vṛṣaṅka* and himself as *Śakavara-ketana* (i.e.) the one who bears a bull standard (Pl. 23).[26] The Colas used the tiger motif for their emblem and standard (Pl. 28).[27] The custom started with Citraratha, a legendary Cola king who bore the title *Vyāghrāketu* after his standard which bore the mark of a tiger.[28] A Rāṣṭrakūṭa family which ruled over Orissa in 12th century AD used the figure of *Garuḍa* as their emblem. Their standard also bore the *Garuḍa* motif.[29] The Kalacuryas of Kalyāṇī had a bull standard and the bull appears on the seals of the charters issued by them.[30] The Yādavas of Devagiri had *Garuḍa* banner and the *Garuḍa* was also used on the seal of their charters.[31] The Hoysalas of Droṇasamudra are represented as having both the tiger crest and tiger standard.[32]

However, the practice of having one device for the *lāñchana* or emblem and another for *dhvaja* or standard was equally in vogue. This distinction is clearly marked by the use of the technical terms *lāñchana* and

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dhvaja in the epigraphs and literature. The Pallavas had a bull emblem but their standard represented the club of the god Śiva (Pl. 23).[33] The western Cālukyas of Badāmi and the later dynasty of Kalyāṇī used a boar crest, and a *Pāli-dhvaja*. The Rāṣṭrakūṭas of Malkhed bore *Garuḍa-lāñchana* and *Pāli-dhvaja*.[34] The Rattas of Saundaṭti and Belgaun had the *Suvarṇa-Garuḍa-dhvaja*, or standard of a golden *Garuḍa*, but the *Sindhūra-lāñchana* or elephant emblem. The Kadambas of Banavasi, and also those of Goa had the *Śakhacharendra-dhvaja* or *Vānara-mahādhvaja* but the *Siṁha-lāñchana* or lion emblem.[35] One branch of the Sindas had the tiger crest and the hooded serpent standard and another branch a tiger and a deer emblem and the *Nīla-dhvaja* or blue standard.[36] The Pāla rulers of Bengal represented the *Dharmacakra Mudrā*, i.e. the Buddhist wheel of Law supported by a deer on either side on their seals.[37] Their *dhvaja*, however, bore the figure of goddess Tārā.[38]

The motifs bull, sun, moon and a conch shell formed the seal of some Orissa rulers but they used a white alligator for their standard.[39] The crest of the western Gaṅgas was an elephant but their standard was made of a bunch of feathers.[40] In this context it is, however, notable that most of the passages referring to *dhvajas* and *lāñchanas* are in verse and it is, therefore, difficult to decide whether the device was that of the crest or of the standard or really both.[41]

Sometimes a dynasty had more than one standard. The imperial Rāṣṭrakūtas, for example displayed the *Pāli-dhvaja* and the *Oka-ketu*[42] (bird ensign). It seems that the *Oka-ketu* was their traditional standard whereas they acquired the *Pāli-dhvaja* from the Cālukyas after defeating them.[43] The Pallavas are described as using two motifs viz. the *khatvāṅga* and *vṛṣabha* on their *dhvajas*[44] (Pl. 23). The standard of some rulers simply bore their names.[45]

When various motifs came into vogue the need was felt to classify the standards on that basis.[46] The standard bearing the elephant motif was classified as *Jayanti* or *Sarvamaṅgalā* type. *Sarvamaṅgalā* also included flags displaying swan, peacock, or parrot. The *Buddhidā* type displayed a flywhisk. *Kalaśa* made of gold, silver or copper featured in the Mahīpati type. A crocodile with four jaws represented *Sarvasiddhidā* and *Aṣṭamaṅgalā* bore an elephant or the peacock. The *Camara* featured in *Sarvabuddhidā* type.

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There are indications that *ketus* were probably made of wood in the beginning. In course of time, metal seems to have replaced it. Copper seems to be favoured in the early days of Buddhism.[47] A legend suggests the use of copper, iron, stone or wood for this purpose.[48] *Pañcaloha*, or a five metal amalgam, was also used.[49] In the Epic age the *dhvajas-ketus* were cast in metal, gold being the most popular. Those who could not afford it perhaps gave a semblance of gold to their *ketus*.[50] The *Garuḍa-dhvaja* represented in the art of Bhārhut (pls. 8, 9) also indicate the metallic composition of the *ketu*.

Dhvaja-yaṣṭi or Staff

We have seen earlier that the people all over the world used totems or symbols even in the remote past. At some stage a need was probably felt for a better display of these symbols. This purpose was well served by a staff. According to J.E. Cirlot "The important point about these symbols is not kind of figure used but the fact that it is always placed at the top of a pole or mast. This raised position is expressive of a kind of imperious spiritual significance of the figure or animal by raising it above the normal level. From this is derived the general symbolism of the banner as a sign of victory and self assertion."[51] Thus the staff which, to start with was simply an instrument in raising the symbol gradually became inseparable from it and came to occupy an important place in the scheme of the *dhvaja*.[52]

As the totem was a sanctified object, the staff, which was integral to it, also came to assume sanctity. Its shape and size depended upon the use it was put to. For chariots it was made of a hard wood fixed at the rear[53] which could even sustain the weight of a reclining warrior.[54] When carried by a *dhvajin* or standard-bearer, it was probably made of a lighter wood. The *tāla* wood was generally favoured for the staff as suggested by nomenclature *dhvajadruma* for the *tāla* tree.[55]

In the art of Bhārhut and Sānchī the staff appears to be made of some solid wood three to six feet in length (Pls. 10, 11). The wood and the size of the staff appear to be almost the same in the Gupta period (Pls. 16, 17). Thereafter the bamboo pole appears to have come in greater vogue.[56] According to the *Bṛhatsaṁhitā* the wood of *baṁsa*, *bakula*, *śāla*, *palāse*, *campaka*, *kadamba*, *nīla* and *tāla* was generally used for the staff.[57]

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Dhvaja-patākā

The *dhvaja*, originally carried on the top of the staff, was later elaborated with some sort of drapery probably added as ornamentation. "As in later times the ensigns of early man had to be clearly seen in the din and dust of battle and in forest and wooded country, so they were made of bright, flashing material to which coloured ribbons or feathers were attached to catch the eye."[58] Such elaboration is met with as early as 3rd millennium BC in Egypt and Assyria.[59] Drapery had not, however, yet become an essential component of the *dhvaja*. Even with the Romans the standards were not necessarily provided with drapery (Pl. 1).

The Indus seals depict standards without any appendage of drapery (Pl. 2). The descriptions of *dhvaja* in the *Ṛgveda* also do not suggest the use of drapery.

It is for the first time in the Epics that the use of ornamental drapery in the *dhvaja* is occasionally met[60] with. Again Indians do not seem to have used any drapery in their standards in fourth century BC.[61] The drapery, however, forms an inseparable part of the *dhvaja* in the Buddhist art of Bhārhut and Sānchī (Pls 8-11). It is generally appended to the staff just below the crest with the help of a triangular buckle. The size of the drapery is about two feet on the staff and four feet in the fly.[62] However, the use of drapery in *dhvajas* had not yet gained universal acceptance in India and some tribal coins representing *Jaya-dhvaja* or *Matsya-dhvaja* do not use it at all (Pl. 5).

In the Gupta age the ornamental drapery is invariably appended to the standard in the shape of a ribbon or streamer (Pls. 14-17, 19). In the post-Gupta period it becomes more prominent than the *ketu* in the scheme of the *dhvaja*. The *Cakra-dhvaja* met with in the art of Ajaṇṭā carries a long streamer, generally eight to ten feet long and one to two feet broad (Pls. 21, 22). The streamer necessarily bears a cut in the fly, thus giving it an appearance of an open snake mouth. In the *Śiśupālabadha*, the *Garuḍa-dhvaja* of Śrī Kṛṣṇa is described as snake-mouthed. Kālidāsa, however, compares *dhvajas* with the fish inhaling air.[63]

The cloth used for making the *dhvaja-patta* also changed with the times. About the beginning of the Christian era a coarse and heavy cloth, probably cotton (Pls. 7-12), was used. But in the Gupta period a lighter

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cloth, such as silk, seems to have come into vogue. Kālidāsa in fact, refers to a *ketu* made of Chinese silk.[64] The *dhvaja* drapery depicted in the Gupta coins is similar to that shown in an Ahicchatra terra-cotta plaque (Pls. 14-17 and 19). The streamers of the *dhvajas* represented in the art of Ajaṇṭā also appear to be silken. Indeed, the increasing importance of the *dhvaja* in the religious and military life of the people appears to have demanded the use of the best possible drapery for the *dhvaja-paṭṭa*.[65]

The drapery which was originally an ornamental appendage became all important in the *dhvaja* complex when the *ketu* or emblem came to be impressed or embroidered on it in the early medieval India. The *Agni-Purāṇa* makes a definite reference to this.[66]

Epigraphic evidence also suggests this : "The crest or the symbol were drawn on cloth and fixed to a rod and were carried either by hand or attached to the chariot and *howdah*".[67] Thus came the change in the make and shape of the ancient standard giving it the look of the modern flag.

Rajju

Rajju (Cord) was another vital component of a *dhvaja*. Its main function was to securely bind the emblem to the staff.[68] In early *dhvajas* when the shafts of wood bore metal capitals the cord prevented the splitting of the staff under the weight of the emblem. In portable standards the cord further kept the staff and emblem firmly joined together (Pl. 9).[69]

A dowel and tang of copper connected the capital to the staff. It was used both in the case of free standing and portable *dhvajas*. The dowel continued to be used in erecting *dhvajas* even in the Gupta age. In the portable standards depicted at Bhārhut and Sānchī, the emblem appears to be nailed to the staff, though the use of the cord to fasten them is also occasionally reflected.

Decoration of Dhvaja

Great care was taken to adorn the *dhvaja* with small bells, frills, gold, garlands and expensive cloth.[70] The *Śakra-dhvaja* is described as being decorated with ornaments by the gods before it was taken to the field.[71]

The *Kapi-dhvaja* of Arjuna was adorned with multi-coloured *patākās*

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of the texture of an *Indrāyudha* or rainbow.[72] The *patākā* was occasionally marked with the symbols of stars and moon.[73] The *patākās* on the *dhvajas* represented in the art of Bhārhut and Sānchī protray geometrical patterns and the crescent and the star symbols (Pls. 11, 12). The staff was either made of gold or heavily worked upon with gold.[74] Highly colourful streamers displaying geometrical patterns adorned the *dhvajas* in the Gupta period (Pls. 21, 22).

Dhvajin (Standard Bearer)

The *dhvaja*, owing to the esteem in which it was held, demanded the services of special people in the community to bear it. The office of the standard-bearer existed in the Epic age. Warriors used to display their *dhvajas* in the battle field but it is not known in what way the accompanying *dhvajins* served the army. They probably carried the standards of their masters mounted on elephant or horse. Many of them got killed in the Mahābhārata war.[75] The protection of the *dhvaja* was regarded as a sacred duty by Indian soldiery in the fourth century BC and the worthiest of the class were chosen as standard-bearers.[76]

Standard-bearers are widely depicted in the art of Bhārhut and Sānchī heading military marches and religious processions. Examples are also found in Ajaṇṭā frescoes (Pls. 21, 22).

The *dhvajin* always accompanied higher state dignitaries such as the king in processions (Pls. 7.11). Occasionally women were engaged as *dhvajins* in the royal court and in state processions (Pl. 4). In the Gupta age dwarfs were often employed to serve as standard-bearers to the monarchs (Pl. 14).

REFERENCES

1. The motif two vessels fixed to a short central staff has been identified by Marshall as incense burner. Marshall, J., *Mohenjo-daro and the Indus Civilization*, Vol. I, p. 69, Pl. XIII. 22.

There is also a possibility that the incense burner was already being worshipped before it came to be associated with the cult of the unicorn. The worship of the incense burner thus might have antidated the worship of the unicorn. Vats, M.S., *Excavations at Harappa*, p. 322.

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2. एता देवसेनाः सूर्यकेतवः सचेतसः अमित्रानो जयन्तु स्वाहा

Atharva-veda, V. 21.12 ;

Also see XI. 10.1, 2, 7; For detailed study on ketu see L. Renou, Publications de l'Institute Francais d' Indologie, No. 5, Pondichery, 1958. I am grateful to Mr. John Irwin for sending me a translation of this paper.

3. All these types are met with in the *Mahābhārata.*

4. ध्वजं तु कुरुराजस्य पाण्डवस्य महोजसः ।
दृष्टवानास्मि सौवर्जं सोमगृहगणान्वितम् ॥

MB, Droṇa, 23. 34 (GP)

5. मृदंगौ चात्र विपुलौ दिव्यौ नन्दोपनन्दकौ ।

MB, Droṇa, 23.85 (GP)

6. रथचक्रध्वजम्

MB, Droṇa, 22.60.

7. ध्वजेनोच्छ्रिततुण्डेन गृधराजेन राजता ।

MB, Droṇa, 142.36

8. Mc Crindle, *Ancient India, Its invasion by Alexander the Great*, pp. 208-9.

9. Cunnigham, A., *Bhilsa Topes*, Pl. XXXII. 8, XXXIII. 22; *The Stūpa of Bhārhut*, Pl. XXXII, 4.

10. Cunningham, A., *Bhilsa Topes*, p. 230; Also Fergusson, J., *Tree and Serpent Worship*, p. 106.

11. Coomaraswamy, Anand K., *History of Indian and Indonesian Art*, p. 31; Maisey (*Sānchī and its Remains.* p. 78) calls it a disc and crescent symbol.

12. Cunningham, A., *The Bhilsa Topes*, p. 111.

13. Also Fleet, J.F., *Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum*, Vol. III, p. 255.

14. *Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum*, Vol. III, p. 255, 292.

15. *Ibid.*, p. 140, also p. 90.

16. Altekar, A.S., *The Coinage of the Gupta Empire*, Pls.

17. Mitra, R.L , *Antiquities of Orissa*, Vol. I, p. 364.

18. Fleet, J.F., *Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum*, p. 219, Pl. XXX.

19. *Ibid.*, p. 283.

20. Cunningham, A., *Coins of Medieval India*, p. 27.

21. George M. Moraes, *The Kadambukula*, p. 377; Some Pallavas also displayed the bull symbol.

22. Meenakshi, C., *Administration and Social Life under the Pallavas*, p. 41.

23. *Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum*, Vol. IV, p. 124; Also see pp. 129, 143; Also *Epigraphia Indica*, Vol. XXXIV, p. 137.

24. *Epigraphia Indica*, Vol. XXXIV, p. 137. In the Natarāja temples, Cidambaram, on some Dvāras, the Pāṇḍya insignia "two fish with a crook between them" is inscribed. James C. Harle, *Temple Gateways in South India*, Pl. 179; Also Pl. 84.
It is notable that in any early Tamil Epic *Śilāppadigāram* (p. 110) the early *dhvajas* of Colas, Ceras and Pāṇḍyas are spoken of as tiger, bow and fish respectively.

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25. This seems all the more certain because in Banskhera and Madhuban plates Harṣavardhan is described as *Paramamāheśvara*,. Tripathi, R.S., *History of Kanauj*, p. 163.
26. Minakshi, C., *Administration and Social Life under the Pallavas*, p. 42.
27. Also see *South Indian Inscriptions*, Vol. III, Part 3, p. 395. *Kaliṅgaṭṭu Parāṇi* gives a graphic description of the Cola standard and some other standards in vogue in 11th century. *IA*, Vol. XIX, pp. 329-331.
28. *Ibid.*
29. गरुड-दर्पण-ध्वज
EI, Vol. XXX, pp. 13.-37.
30. *Gazetteer of Bombay Presidency*, Vol. 1, 2, p. 299.
31. *Ibid.*
32. *Ibid.*
33. Some Pallava kings, however, used *Vṛṣabha-dhvaja*; Also *EI*, Vol. IV, p. 177; XVII, p. 117.
34. *Gazetteer of the Bombay Presidency*, Vol. 1.2, p. 299 fn.
35. Fleet, J.F., *Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum*, Vol. III, p. 151, fn. 3. Also *Gazetteer of the Bombay Presidency*, Vol. 1.2, p. 299 fn.
Śilāhāras, the rulers of Konkan also bore सुवर्ण-गरुड-ध्वज. They claimed themselves to be the descendants of Jimūtavāhana, the hero of Sanskṛit play *Nāgānanda*, who lay himself on a rock (*śilā*) as food (*āhāra*) for Garuḍa, the divine bird. The golden Garuḍa banner was indeed reminiscent of this great episode in the life of their ancestor. Srinivasa Ayyangar, P.T., *Bhoja Raja*, p. 49; A kingdom of south Kerala bore a *Hasti-dhvaja*. Pl. 27.
36. *Gazetteer of the Bombay Presidency, op. cit.*
37. Majumdar, N.G., *Inscriptions of Bengal*, Vol. III, p. 5.
38. *Epigraphia Indica*, Vol. XXXIV, p. 137.
39. सितधातुमय-गोधा-शिखरीकृत-लोहित-लोचन-आम्बर ध्वज meaning the standard made of 'a piece of cloth bearing the representation of a silver alligator above that of a snake or of two eyes in red colour' *EI*, Vol. XXXIV, p. 136.
40. मदगजेन्द्र लांछन and पिछ ध्वज. In an inscription of 11 century A.D. from Belgaon distt. (*IA*, Vol. XVIII, p. 309) it is called the standard of the divine *Arhat*. *Gazetteer of Bombay Presidency*, Vol. 1.2, p. 209; The standard of a mythical Gaṅga king named Koṅkaṇi is said to have been a Haṁsa (goose). *EI*, Vol. IV., p. 177.
41. *Gazetteer of Bombay Presidency, op. cit.*, p. 299 fn. The words crest and banner should be better read as emblem and standard in the above passage.
42. Sircar, D.C., *Indian Epigraphy*, p. 154; Jinasena has defined *Pāli-dhvaja* in the 22nd Parva of his *Ādi Purāṇa* as follows . Flags are of ten kinds according to the signs, viz. garland, cloth, peacock, lotus, swan, Garuḍa, lion, bull, elephant and quiot. A *Pāliketana* or *Pālidhvaja* is a flag which contains in the four directions 108 flags of each of these ten kinds, or $1080 \times 4 = 4320$ flags in all the four directions. Reu, B.N., *History of the Rāshṭrakuṭas*, p. 34.

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43. *Pāli-dhvaja* is first mentioned in the records of Vinayāditya. It is described as an insignia of supreme dominion which was acquired by his father after crushing some paramount king of northern India. He himself boasts of pushing on further to the north than his father and once again acquiring the *Pāli-dhvaja*. *IA*, Vol. IX, p. 129; Also *Gazetteer of the Bombay Presidency*, Vol. 1.2, p. 387.
44. Sircar, D.C., *Op. cit.*, p. 152.
45. *Epigraphia Indica*, Vol. XXXIV, p. 137.
46. *Yuktikalpataru* describes these types.
47. John Irwin, *The Burlington Magazine*, Vol. CXV, November 1973, p. 716.
In this context the opinion of James Ferguson "that all the pillars surmounted by lions in front of the caves as at Karlee, supported originally a wheel in metal" is significant. *Tree and Serpent Worship*, p. 123.
48. *Ibid.*, Vol. CXVIII, October 1975, p. 632.
49. The Garuḍa crowning the iron pillar at Mehrauli was made of *pañcaloha*. John Irwin, *The Burlington Magazine*, Vol. CXVII, p. 632 fn. 5.
50. *MB*, Udyoga, 57.20; Bhīṣma, 102.17; Droṇa, 23.62.
51. Cirlot, J.E., *The Dictionary of Symbols*, p. 103. Our use of the terms *dhvaja-yaṣṭi*, *dhvaja-stambha* and *dhvaja-daṇḍa* has nothing in common with the free standing columns.
52. John Irwin in his study of Aśokan pillars (*Burlington Magazine*, Vol. CXVIII, 1976, p. 746) is inclined to give *stambha* or *yaṣṭi* an all important place in the scheme of *dhvaja*. He asserts that "From the religious angle the shaft of a votive pillar was more important than any emblem it may or may not have borne. This is however at variance with the observations of J.N. Banerjee, (*Journal of the Indian Society of Oriental Art*, Vol. V, pp. 14-15) that "The sacred message was embodied in the animal figures and not in the columns themselves." Also see Niharranjan Ray *Maurya and post-Maurya Art.*, pp. 2-3; S.P. Gupta, The *Roots of Indian Art*, p. 16 Devahuti, D, *ABORI*, Vol. LII, pp. 161-73.
53. Hopkins, E.W., *The Position of the Ruling Caste in Ancient India*, p. 167.
54. *MB*, Bhīṣma, 60.46, 97.45 etc.
55. *See Bācaspatyam.*
56. सर्व्वेसां चैव वंशस्तु दण्डः सम्पति कारकः
Yuktikalpataru, 495, p. 68.
57. *Bṛhatsaṁhitā*, Chaps. 43, 72.
58. Edward T.J , *Standards, Guidons and Colours of the Commonwealth Forces*, p. 10.
59. *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Vol. IX, p. 276, figs. 1, 2.
60. Hopkins, E.W., *Position of the Ruling Caste in Ancient India*, p. 188. Arjuna's Dhvaja was decorated with banners.
इन्द्रायुध सवर्णाभिः पताकाभिरलङ्कृतः ।
MB, Bhīṣma, 46.43.
महतां सपताकानामादित्यसमतेजसाम् ।
MB, Bhīṣma, 20.42.

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61. McCrindle, J.W., *Ancient India, Its Invasion by Alexander the Great*, pp. 208-9.
62. *Śiśupālavadha*, V. 13.
63. मतस्यध्वजा वायुवशाद्विवीर्णोमुखै प्रवृद्धध्वजिनीरजांसि ।
    विभुः पिवन्तः परमार्थमत्स्याः पर्याविलांनवि नवोदकानि ॥
    (the fish standards with their mouths opened by the force of the wind, and receiving in the increased dust of the army, looked like real fishes drinking the new turbid water.) *Raghuvaṁśa*, VII. 40.
    Kālidāsa has taken the streamer to mean the *dhvaja* itself.
64. चीनानशुकमेवकेतो *Śākuntalam*, I. 32; Also *Naiṣadhacarita*, 16.6; *Ketu* here means flag only.
65. This is evident from a description of *dhvaja* in *Kirātārjunīyam*.
    राजादिभः पार्थ मरूतायभिन्नरूपैरुल्कार्चिः स्फुटगतिभिध्वजांशुकानाम् ।
    तेजोभिः कनकनिकासराजिगौरेरायामः क्रियत इव स्म सातिरेकः ॥ VII, 6.
66. *Agni pu*, 61. 29-30 (quoted before).
67. Rice, L., *Mysore Inscription*, p. 33.
68. ध्वजामिव मेहेन्द्रस्य रज्जुमुक्तौ प्रकल्पितौ
    Rāmāyaṇa, Yuddha, 45.17 :
    This means removal of the cord led to the fall of the emblem.
69. According to John Irwin the bell met in Aśokan columns of Lauria Nandangarh, Rampurvā, Vaiśāli etc. was a development from the cord. The *Burlington Magazine*, Vol CXVII, October 1975, pp. 638-39. Some connection between the cord and the bell is also indicated by the representation of *dhvaja* in the art of Bhārhut (pls. 8, 9).
70. किङ्किणीजालनद्धानां काञ्चनस्रग्वतां रवैः ।
    MB, Bhiṣma., 19.41.
71. आदित्या वसवो रुद्रा विश्वेदेवास्तयाश्विनौ ।
    अलञ्चक्रुस्तमालोक्य मरुतश्च विभूजणैः ॥
    Samarāṅgaṅasūtradhāra, 17.8.
72. *Ibid.*, 50.44.
73. See *Dhvajapaṭṭa* above.
74. See *Dhvajayaṣṭi* above.
75. सादितध्वजनागाश्च हतप्रवरवाजिनः
    MB, Bhiṣma, 48.11.
76. Mc Crindle, *Ancient India—Its invasion by Alexander the Great*, pp. 208-9.

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5

Use of the Dhvaja

In ancient India *dhvaja*, besides being an object of worship seems to have served as

(1) a distinguishing mark of the leader,
(2) a symbol of royal regalia, and
(3) a rallying point for the troops.

As a distinguishing mark, the value of the standard is comparable with that of an emblazoned knight's armour in medieval Europe. The warriors used to raise their standards before marching to the battle-field. Arjuna fighting for Virāṭa against the Kauravas, raised his *Kapi-dhvaja* before going to war.[1] This he did even though the chariot was not his own and flew prince Uttara's *Siṁha-dhvaja.* The suggestion is that a warrior of repute fought only under his own *dhvaja.* It is also likely that he used the *dhvaja* to reveal the presence of the Pāṇḍavas in the Virāṭa camp since the period of their one-year exile incognito was over. The presence of warriors like Bhīṣma and Arjuna in the battle field could be established by virtue of their *dhvajas.*[2] In a particular engagement where Arjuna's presence was not suspected, the sight of his *Kapi-dhvaja* made it known to Gurū Droṇāchārya.[3] Similarly in the *Rāmāyaṇa* it is related that Bharata's presence at the head of a large force was revealed to Lakṣamaṇa by his *Kovidāra-dhvaja.*[4]

The eleven Rudras carried the *Vṛṣabha-dhvaja* in miniature in

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imitation of their leader.[5] In the *Śiśupālavadha* the camp of Śrīkṛṣṇa is described as clearly marked by the *Garuḍa-dhvaja*.[6] In course of time, these became so integral a part of warfare that some military formations came to be known as *dhvajini*.[7]

The use of *dhvaja* as a decorative device in royal ceremonials was equally important. The colourful *dhvajas* carried in the forefront of the marching army or mounted on the chariots made an impressive sight. Men of rank were always accompanied by a *dhvajin* in the rear (Pls. 7-11). The kings even when they visited religious shrines, had a band of standard-bearers marching in front. The art of Ajaṇṭa[8] represents many ceremonial scenes with escorting soldiers holding *dhvajas* with swallow tailed streamers and tassels. The scene depicting the march of the royal army also depict *dhvajas* in a similar manner.[9] Incidentally, some standards bear smaller streamers and differ in the elaboration of the surmounting device. The *dhvaja* bearers generally marched in the fore-front.[10] The *Kaliṅgattu parāṇi*, a Tamil poem also refers to this practice.[11]

The *dhvaja* as a battle ensign was well known in ancient India. Its virtue lay in its potential to inspire the troops in war and providing a rallying point. Being a symbol of faith it served as a morale booster. The Vedic Indian beseeched his *dhvaja* to grant him victory.[12] Subsequently, it assumed divine attributes. A story in the *Bṛhatsaṁhitā* relates that when the gods found themselves weak and incapable of facing the might of the Daityas they approached Lord Brahmā for help. Brahmā sent them to Lord Viṣṇu with the assurance that the latter would bless them with a *dhvaja*, the sight of which would put the Daityas to flight.[13] The gods acted accordingly and succeeded in vanquishing their enemies.

The *Viṣṇudharmottara Purāṇa*[14] also relates a similar story. When the Devas could not contain the assault of the Dānavas they went to Nārāyaṇa for help and guidance. The latter blessed them with *Indra-dhvaja*, the standard under which they successfully fought the evil-doers. The *Agni Purāṇa* relates that the gods conquered the demons by displaying a *dhvaja* impressed with the sign of divine weapons.[15] The *Yuktikalpataru* defines *dhvaja* as the symbol of an army or of a king carried on a staff.[16]

In the Epics and the Purāṇas no warrior of any consequence appears without a *dhvaja*. In ancient India gods were also viewed as

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heroes of war and were assigned their own *dhvajas*. Viṣṇu, Śiva, and Kārttikeya carried their *Garuḍa-dhvaja*, *Vṛṣabha-dhvaja* and *Mayūra-dhvaja* respectively. In a fragment of relief from Jamalgarhi Māra, the god of love is represented accompanied by a *dhvaja* bearer holding the *Makara-dhvaja* aloft in his left hand.[17] In Purāṇic rituals gods were offered with *Mahā-dhvaja* or a *dhvaja* in accordance with their importance.

Warriors mounted their *dhvajas* on their chariots at the commencement of a march. King Virāṭa and his generals did so before taking the field against the Kauravas.[18] Arjuna also performed the ritual before entering the battle arena. He first circumambulated the chariot and then wearing some kind of hand-armour hoisted the *dhvaja*.[19] This was probably the accepted custom associated with the consecration of the standard. While camping, the leading warriors displayed the *dhvaja* at their residences.[20]

In the Mahābhārata war, among the Pāṇḍava warriors Arjuna displayed a *Vānara*,[21] Yudhiṣṭhira a pair of *Mṛdaṅga*,[22] Bhīma a *siṁha*,[23] Nakula a *śarabha*,[24] and Sahadeva a *haṁsa*[25] symbol on their standards. Abhimanyu chose the bird *śāraṅga*,[26] five sons of Draupadi the images of Dharma, Vāyu, Indra and Aśwanikumāra,[27] Dhṛṣṭadyumna a *Kovidāra*[28] and Ghaṭotakaca a *gṛddha*[29] as their *dhvaja* symbols.

Among the Kaurava heroes, Duryodhana displayed on his standard a serpent,[30] Bhīṣma a *tāla*,[31] Droṇa an altar covered with the deer skin and kamaṇḍalu,[32] Karṇa an elephant chain,[33] Kṛpācārya a bull,[34] and Aśvathāma a lion-tail.[35] Jayadratha for his *dhvaja* motif had a boar,[36] Somadatta a yūpa,[37] Śalya an image of Sītā or plough line,[38] Bhoja an elephant,[39] Alāyudha a band of jackals,[40] Vṛṣasena a peacock,[41] Bhūriśrava a yūpa,[42] Bṛhadbala a lion,[43] Kaliṅgarāja a flame,[44] Pradyumna a crocodile[45] and Uttara a lion.[46]

Skanda, the commander-in-chief of the gods, in his fight against the demon, Tāraka is described in the *Mahābhārata* as displaying a peacock on his *dhvaja*.[47] The *patākā* accompanying his *dhvaja* was of red tincture.[48] Śiva the god of destruction chose a bull as his *dhvaja* symbol in his fight against the demon Tripurāsura.[49] In his wars against the Asuras Indra flew the *Vaijayanta-dhvaja* on his chariot.[50] Goddess Durgā is depicted with the wings of the bird *śikhī* on her *dhvaja*,[51] and Balarāma displays a *Tāla-dhvaja*.[52]

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In the Rāmāyaṇa, Rāvaṇa, the demon king is said to display on his *dhvaja*, a human head,[53] Meghanāda a lion,[54] Atikāya a Rāhū,[55] Prahasta a snake,[56] and Kaṁbha a Śeśanāga.[57]

It is intriguing that all the reputed warriors carry their own standards and not of their leader or ruler. The Pāṇḍava warriors displayed neither the *Mṛdaṅga-dhvaja* of Yudhiṣṭhira, the ruler, nor the *Kovidāra-dhvaja* of Dhṛṣṭadyumna, their commander-in-chief. So was the case with the Kauravas. This was probably an extension of the Vedic tradition of war in which all the tribal leaders, who were by and large independent of each other carried their personal *dhvajas* in war. In the Epic age the warriors of a particular status such as *Mahārathī* or *Atirathī* enjoyed the privilege of displaying a standard. The followers of the commander may have gone either with the standard of their master in miniature or without it.

Some rulers displayed their *dhvaja* on the coins as a symbol of their power. The earliest examples in this respect are provided by punch marked coins of Yaudheyas, Mālavas, Ābhīras etc. In Gupta coins the *dhvaja* appears in association with the person of the king. On the standard type coin of Samudragupta "the depiction of a Garuḍa Standard or Garuḍa Pillar as a part of the obverse device, which is a scene of worshipping Agni as a mark of the celebration of victory in battles, is purely an art motif that was introduced with a purpose. The representation of that mythical bird as perching on a pillar, is nothing but a suggestion by means of a suitable symbol, viz. the supremacy of Samudragupta over all human beings like that of Garuḍa over all birds and snakes."[58] The fact is also attested to by the coin legend 'the conquerer of hundred wars' etc. The Hūṇa ruler Mihirakula displayed his *dhvaja*, a recumbent bull on top of staff on his coins.[59] These coins also bear the legend '*Jayatu Vṛṣaḥ*' i.e. may the bull be victorious.

The rulers adored their *dhvaja* like a divinity because it was a symbol of the god in whom they reposed their trust for protection and success. The symbol of their lord was carried to the battle field, and victories were ascribed to it. The Mandsor inscription of Yaśodharman reads "May that very long banner of (the God) Śūlpāṇi destroy the glory of your enemies, (that banner) which bears (a representation of) the bull (Nandi) marked by the five fingers (dipped in some dye and then)

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placed on him by (Pārvatī) the daughter of the mountain (Himālaya) who causes the distant regions in which the demons are drived wild with fear by (his) terrible bellowings to shake; (and) who makes the glens of (the mountain) Sumeru to have their rocks split open by the blows of his horns."[60] The Vijayanagar inscription of Devarāja II conveys a similar sentiment. The courage of the king's "numerous enemies", it is stated, "was extinguished by the mere touch of the violent wind, that was produced by his banners, which were raised at the very moment of the starting of his victorious expeditions."[61]

In a war the principal effort of the warriors was to pull down and if possible capture the enemy *Dhvaja*. As the *dhvaja* was supposed to be a divine manifestation, the effort was directed to depriving the enemy of the divine protection by destroying his standard. Even among the *Vedic* Āryans the main object of a warrior was to bring down the enemy standard by directing his arrows and weapons at it.[62] Lakṣmaṇa suspecting some foul play on the part of Bharata sought Rāma's permission to capture his *Kovidāra-dhvaja*.[63] Arjuna in his encounter with Karṇa first destroyed the latter's *dhvaja* and then killed him.[64] In fact in the Epic the warriors are described as very much involved in destroying the *dhvajas* of their adversaries. Of course the rulers took great pride in the achievement of this primary objective. This was indeed done with a view to humbling the enemy and breaking his morale.

The practice continued even at a later date. The Rāṣṭrakuṭa ruler Govinda II captured as many as thirteen standards of his humbled adversaries.[65] Nandivarmā eulogises the great feat of seizing the enemy's mirror banner by his general Udayacandra.[66] A Cālukya king Vinayāditya has left a record that his father acquired the *Pāli-dhvaja*, the insignia of supreme dominion, by defeating a paramount king of northern India. He boasts of having performed the same feat himself.[67] Another Cālukya king Vikramāditya II (AD 733-747) speaks of defeating the Pallava king Nandivarman and capturing his club banner.[68] Further, the *Pāli-dhvaja*, of which the Cālukyas were so proud of, seems to have been taken away by the Rāṣṭrakūṭas of Malkhed when they defeated them.[69]

The Cola king Kulothuṅga greatly revered the tiger standard of his family and rejoiced at vanquishing his enemies and lowering their standards. The *Kaliṅgaṭṭu Parāṇi*[70] records the exploits of his general

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Karuṇākara, who planted the imperial tiger standard on mount Meru, after having lowered the standards of the boar, the plough, the stag, the lion, the lute and the bow and the fish.[71] It further says that he placed Indra as the tiger in his standard and that when the lofty tiger standard was raised supreme over the world, other kings also raised their banners and gods shouted with joy.[72] The Arab invader Muhammad-Bin-Kasim destroyed the great red flag of Deval to demoralise its inhabitants.[73] After the victory over Dahir, Hajjaj, the leader of the Arab expedition even sent some of the former's standards to the Calif.[74]

Beliefs and Portents

Some beliefs and portents were also associated with the use of dhvaja in war. The trembling of the *dhvaja* without reason augured ill for the bearer. The Kauravas witnessed such foreboding on the eve of their encounter with Arjuna.[75] Crows seeking protection in the *dhvaja* was considered inauspicious.[76] A vulture sitting over the standard facing south was also considered a bad omen.[77] A *dhvaja* bearing an inauspicious symbol was despised, so much so that the warriors of repute refused to fight its bearer. Bhīṣma, the mightiest of the Kauravas, declined to fight Śikhaṇḍi, a brave warrior on the Pāṇḍava side, because besides his having been a woman his *dhvaja* carried an inauspicious sign.[78]

The fall of the *dhvaja* from the chariot was a sign of impending disaster. The *Veṇisaṁhāra* relates how the chamberlain and the queen of Duryodhana, became perturbed when told about the fall of their master's *ketana* owing to a heavy storm.[79]

It was also believed that a good *dhvaja* was blessed with certain attributes and these assured victory to the bearer. The *kapidhvaja* which was considered ideal in this respect. It was bright, tall, a '*yojana*' long (no doubt meant metaphorically) accompanied by supernatural beings and bore a resemblance with the *Indra-dhvaja*. It never got stuck in trees or hills.[80]

Indian ethics of war did not permit attack on an enemy who surrendered and was incapable of defending his *dhvaja* and weapons.[81] The submission of one's standard was considered a sign of surrender. Sovereign rulers were presented with a standard by the feudatories. The

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tributary rulers of Samudragupta made the gift of the royal standard to the emperor.[82] In the *Rājataraṅgiṇī*, a comparatively late work, it is related that the ruler of Laṅkā acknowledged his subordination to the ruler of Kashmir by presenting him with standards whose crests were decorated with representation of giants' heads. These standards acquired from beyond the sea were taken out in procession by the kings of Kashmir.[83]

In ancient India victories in war were often commemorated by the rulers by erecting *Dhvaja-stambhas*. The Mehrauli inscription of Candragupta II and Bhitari inscription of Skandgupta appear to be such types. In the *Raghuvaṁśa* also there is a reference to the erection of *Jaya-dhvaja* by Raghu after the successful completion of his victories.[84] In the *Kathāsaritasāgara* one king Vatsarāja is reported to have implanted *Jaya-stambha* after completing his victories in the east.[85] The *Kādambarī* also refers to the erection of *Vijaya-stambhas* by the rulers in the newly conquered states.[86] The Vijayanagar inscriptions of Devarāja II also refers to the erection of *Jaya-stambha* on the sea coast.[87]

Entitlement to Dhvaja

The *dhvaja* was associated with the community rather than with the individual in the early stages of its evolution. In the Vedic age it was adored as a symbol of victory to the community.[88] The political communities in the age of Pāṇinī adopted *lakṣaṇas* or *standards*[89] to serve a similar intent. The symbol carried at the forefront of the army by an adversary of Alexander was probably the *dhvaja* of the state. The *dhvaja* thus gradually became dynastic in nature.

In the *Mahābhārata* all the warriors of repute are, however, described as bearing separate *dhvaja*s. This suggests the absence of a common standard in the army. The standard of the king or *senāpati* did not merit any special consideration *vis-a-vis* the other standards.

The second grade warriors probably carried the *dhvaja* of thier chief. The evidence of the *Vāmana Purāṇa* that the *gaṇas* of Śiva carried *Vṛṣabhadhvaja* in miniature,[90] seems to support this conclusion. In the *Śiśupālavadha* there is a reference to soldiers following their master with bent flags to avoid the obstacle of gates.[91]

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Generally speaking the *dhvaja* was a royal insignia exclusive to sovereigns but occasionally the subordinate rulers also enjoyed this privilege. The Mahāmaṇḍaleśvaras under the Cālukyas of Kalyāṇī who were semi-independent rulers used separate *dhvajas*. Of these the Sindas were distinguished by *Nīla-dhvaja*,[92] Rattas by *Suvarṇa-Garuḍa-dhvaja*.[93] Senāvaras by *Phaṇi-dhvaja*,[94] and the Kadambas by *Vānara-dhvaja*.[95] Probably the feudatories enjoying some amount of independence were entitled to the use of *dhvajas*. The *dhvajas* are no where spoken of in relation to individuals.

REFERENCES

1. MB, *Virāṭa*, 41, 3-6.
2. चिन्हमात्रेण भीष्मं च प्रज्ञचक्षुस्तत्र कौरवाः ।
   तथा पाण्डुसुताः पार्थ चिन्हमात्रेण जज्ञिरे ॥
   MB, Bhīṣma, 48.58.
3. एतद्ध्वजाग्र पार्थस्य दूरतः सम्प्रकाशते ।
   एज धोजाः सजवदो रोरवीति च वानरः ॥
   MB, Virāṭa, 48.4; Also see *Raghuvaṁsa*, VII. 60.
4. एज वै सुमहाञ्छ्रीमान विटपी सम्प्रकाशते ।
   विराजत्युज्जलस्कन्धः कोविदारध्वजो रथे ॥
   Rāmāyaṇa, Ayodhyā, 96.18.
5. *Vāmana Pu*, 42.50.
6. *Śiśupālavadha*, V. 13.
7. *MB*, Droṇa, 67.5; *Śiśupālavadha* XII.66; *Naiṣadha carita*, XVI.6.
8. Yazdani, C., *Ajaṇṭā*, Vol. IV, Pls. 38, 39.
9. *Ibid.*, Pls. 50, 57-60 text p. 91; Also our Pl. 21.
10. पुरः प्रधावद्ध्वजवाहिनी
    Harṣacarita, p. 205.
11. *Kaliṅgaṭṭu Parāni*, X. 33-4 in *IA*, XIX, 329 ff. Du Jarrio, a foreign traveller has given a graphic description of the use of standards in the court of Vijayanagar. See Mahalingam, T.V., *Administration and Social Life under Vijayanagar*, p. 52, Also Sewell, R.A., *Forgotten Empire*, p. 372.
12. *Ṛgveda*, X. 103.11.

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13. देवानुवाच भगवान क्षीरोदे केशवः स वः केतुम् ।
यं दास्यति तं दृष्ट्वा नाजौ स्थास्यन्ति वो दैत्याः ॥
Bṛhatsaṁhitā, 43.2.

In the *Devī Purāṇa* also there is a similar story of Viṣṇu's granting a Dhvaja to Indra (Chapter II).

विद्यातः सर्वशत्रूणां कर्तव्यो वृत्रमध्वज ।
स तथेति तदा तुष्टः केतुं तस्य समर्पयत् ॥
तव विष्णो महावाहो केतुं सम्पश्य वैरिणेः ।
येऽसुरा ये च गन्धर्वा ये दैतैया महावलाः ॥
ते ते नाशं समा जग्मुस्तवकेतुप्रदर्शनात् ।
Devī Pu, 11.36-37.

14. ध्वजयेते प्रदास्यामि भवतामरिनाशनम् ।
दृष्टमात्रेण येनेह विद्राविष्यन्ति दानवाः ॥
Viṣṇudharmottara Pu, II.154.12.

15. ध्वजं कृत्वा सुरैर्दैत्या जिताः शस्त्रादिचिन्हितम् ।
Agni Pu, 61.28.

16. सेनाचिन्हं क्षितीशानां दण्डोध्वज रति स्मृतः
Yuktikalpataru, p. 68.

17. *ASIAR*, 1921-22, p. 58 Pl. XXV b.

18. *MB*, Virāṭa, 30, 18-20 also 33.17.

19. *Ibid.*, 41.6.

20. *Śiśupālavadha*, V. 13.

21. For details see *Kapi-dhvaja*.

22. ध्वजं तु कुरुराजस्य पाण्डवस्य महौजसः ।
दृष्टवानस्मि सौवर्णं सोमंग्रहगणान्वितम् ॥
MB, Droṇa, 23.84

मृदङ्गौ चात्र विपुलौ दिव्यौ नन्दोपनन्दकौ ।
MB, Droṇa, 23.85

यस्य ध्वजाग्रे नदतो मृदङ्गौ ।
नन्दोपनन्दौ मधुरौ युक्तरूपौ ॥
MB, Vana, 254.6

The above evidence if read separately associates two *dhvajas* (one with moon and stars the other with drums) with Yudhiṣṭhira. The cumulative evidence can be better interpreted to mean that the *dhvaja* of Yudhiṣṭhira comprised two supernatural

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mṛdaṅgas named *Nanda* and *Upananda* with the moon and stars symbols in the *Patākā.*

The presence of the moon and the star symbols in a *patākā* in the Epic age undoubtedly indicated the unending fame of the person who bore it. Among the Pāṇḍava warriors only Arjuna and Yudhiṣṭhira are described as bearing these symbols in their *dhvaja.* It is interesting that the presence of these symbols on the coins of some western Kṣatrapas and Gautamiputra Yajña Sātakarṇi has been interpreted to convey a similar sense (Sivaramamurti, C. *Numismatic parallels of Kālidāsa*, p. 9). The depiction of these symbols on the *dhvaja-pātākas* widely met with in the art of Bhārhut and Sānchī indeed conveyed a similar meaning.

The connotation of this is clear from a verse of Kālidāsa, which describes the growing fame of Raghu.

आरूढमद्रीनुदधीन वितीर्णं
भुजङ्गमानां वसतिं प्रविष्टम् ।
ऊर्ध्वं गतं यस्य न चानुबन्धि
यशः परिच्छेत्तुमियत्तयालम् ॥

Raghuvaṁśa, VI.77.

'His fame ascended mountains, crossed the oceans, entered the abode of the snakes (*pātāka*) went up to heaven, and being still expansive was too much to be measured by any standard.

23. जम्बुनदमयः केतुः केसरी सः नरसत्तम ।
पपात भीमसेनस्य भीष्मेण यथितो रथात् ॥

MB, Bhiṣma, 45.33 also 91.70

24. शरभं पृष्टसौवर्णं नकुलस्य महाध्वजम् ।

MB, Droṇa, 23.86 (GP)

25. हंसस्तु राजतः श्रीमान् ध्वजे घण्टापताकवान् ।

MB, Droṇa, 23.87 (GP)

26. अभिमन्योः कुमारस्य शार्ङ्गपक्षी हिरण्मयः ।

MB, Droṇa, 23.89 (GP)

In Bhiṣma Parva he is, however, reported as bearing a Kārṇikāra symbol on his *dhvaja.*

जाम्बूनदविचित्रेण कार्णिकारेण केतुना

MB, Bhiṣma, 45.8.

27. धर्ममारुतशक्राणामश्विनोः प्रतिमास्तथा

MB, Droṇa, 39.16.

28. कोविदारध्वजम्

MB, Bhiṣma, 50.89

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29. घटोत्कचस्य राजेन्द्र ध्वजे गृध्रो व्यरोचत Elsewhere he is spoken of as रथचक्रध्वजं वीरम्

Droṇa, 22.60.

30. यस्य नागो ध्वजाग्रे वै हेमकेतन संश्रितः ।

MB, Virāṭa, 50.12 Also Bhiṣma, 17.25.

Droṇa, 25.13.

31. हेमतालध्वजं भीष्मं राजते स्यन्दने स्थितम् ।

MB, Bhiṣma, 16.41.

तालेन महताभीस्मः पञ्चतारेण केतुना ।

MB, Bhiṣma, 17.18.

यस्तु नीलानुसारेण पञ्चतारेण केतुना ।

MB, Virāṭa, 50.17.

यस्य तारार्कचित्रोऽसो रथे ध्वजवरः स्थितः ।

MB, Virāṭa, 50.18.

All evidence on the *dhvaja* of Bhiṣma when read together suggests that it comprised a *tāla* (tree) and a blue *pātāka* bearing the sun and five stars symbol.

32. यत्रैषा काञ्चनी वेदी प्रदीप्ताग्निशिखोपमा ।
उच्छ्रिता काञ्चने दण्डे पताकाभिरलंकृता ॥

MB, Virāṭa, 53.1.

जाम्बूनदमयीवेदी कमण्डलुविभूजिता ।
केतुराचार्यमुख्यस्य द्रोणस्य धनुषा सह ॥

MB, Bhiṣma, 17.24.

The above descriptions of the *dhvaja* suggest that it comprised a golden altar, covered with black deer skin and surmounted by a mendicant's wooden pot. The evidence of Bhiṣma Parva, however, adds a bow to this ensemble. In any case the Vedi and *Kamaṇḍalu* were basic to the *dhvaja* of Droṇa.

33. नागकक्ष्या तु रुचिराध्वजाग्रे यस्य तिष्ठति

MB, Virāṭa, 50.15; 80.12; Karṇa, 40.81.

34. स्यन्दनेन महार्हेण केतुना वृषभेण च ।

MB, Bhiṣma, 17.27.

गोवृषो गौतमस्यासीत् कृपस्य सुपरिष्कृतः ।

MB, Droṇa, 80.14.

35. धनुर्ध्वजाग्रे यस्य दृश्यते ।

MB, Virāṭa, 50.9.

अश्वत्थामा ययौ यत्तः सिंहलाङ्गूलकेतनः

MB, Bhiṣma, 17.21

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सिंहलाङ्गूललक्ष्माणम्

MB, Droṇa, 24.30, Also 80.10.

Two different types of *dhvajas* are spoken of in respect of Asvatthāmā, one bearing the symbol of 'bow' and the other the 'tail of lion'. We are, however, inclined to believe that the bow was the *dhvaja* symbol and the lion-tail a *pātāka* symbol in the *dhvaja* complex of Asvatthāmā.

36. वराह सिन्धुराजस्य

MB, Droṇa, 80.20.

37. सोमदत्तेः पुनर्यूपो

MB, Droṇa, 80.22; Bhūriśravā had also Yūpa symbol for his *Dhvaja*. Droṇa, 24.53.

38. मद्रराजस्य शल्यस्यध्वजाग्रेऽग्निशिखामिव ।
सौवर्णी प्रतिपश्याम सीतामप्रतिमां शुभाम् ॥

MB, Droṇa, 80.18; Also

शलस्य तु महाराज राजतो द्विरदो महान् ।
कृतः काञ्चनचित्राङ्गैर्मयूरैरुपशोभितः ॥

Droṇa, 80.24.

39. मर्तिकावतकं भोजं ततः कुञ्जरकेतनम् ।

MB, Droṇa, 47.8

40. तस्यापि गोमायुबलाभिगुप्तो

MB, Droṇa, 151.18.

41. मयूरो वृषसेनस्य

MB, Droṇa, 80.16.

42. यूपकेतुरमित्रहा

MB, Droṇa, 24.5, Bhīsma, 70.12.

43. सिंहकेतु

MB, Bhiṣma, 111.31.

44. शुशुभेकेतुमुख्येन पावकेन कलिङ्गकः ।

MB, Bhiṣma, 17.34.

45. उच्छ्रित्य मकरं केतुम्

MB, Vana, 18.2 Also 18.7.

46. ध्वजं च सिंहम्

MB, Virāṭa, 33.17.

47. तेन तस्य रथो भाति मयूरेण महात्मनः ।
यथा स्कन्दस्य राजेन्द्र मयूरेण विराजिता ॥

MB, Droṇa, 80.17.

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48. पताका कार्तिकेयस्य विशाखस्य च लोहिता ।
MB, Vana, 220.19.

49. त्रिपुरहनरथो यद्वद् गोवृषेण विराजते ।
MB, Droṇa, 80.15.
रथयष्टिं वियत्कृष्टां स्थापयामास गोवृषम् ।
MB, Karṇa, 24.78.

50. वैजयन्तम्
MB, Vana, 43.8.

51. शिखिपिच्छध्वजंधरे
MB, Bhīṣma, 23.6 (GP).

52. तालध्वजो रामः
MB, Karṇa, 34.2.

53. ध्वजं मनुष्यशीर्षम्
Ram, Yudha, 100.14.

54. मृगराजकेतुः
Ram, Yudha, 59.15.

55. ध्वजभृङ्ग प्रतिष्ठेन राहुणाभिविराजेत ।
Ram, Yudha, 80.17.

56. उरग ध्वज
Ram, Yudha, 57.26.

57. पन्नगराजकेतुः
Ram, Yudha, 59.20.

58. Chatterjee, C.D., *Journal of the U.P. Historical Society* 1957, p. 45.

59. Cunningham, A., *Coins of Medieval India*, p. 27.

60. *Corpus Inscriptionum*, Vol. III, p. 147.

61. प्रत्युद्यज्जैत्रयात्रासमसमयसमुद्भूतकेतुप्रसूतस्फायद्वात्योपहत्याप्रतिहत विमतौद्यप्रतापप्रदीपः
Hultzsch, E., *South Indian Inscriptions*, Vol. I, p. 163.

62. स्पर्धन्ते वाड देवहूये अत्र येषु ध्वजेषु दिद्यवः पतन्ति
Ṛgveda, VII. 85.2.

63. *Rām*, Ayodhyā, 96.21.

64. *MB*, Karṇa, 67.12-15.

65. *Epigraphia Indica*, Vol. XXXIV, p. 137. Nesarika grant of Govinda III, the Rāṣṭrakūṭa king mentions the following standards of his contemporary rulers, whom he humbled in war :
    1. Eastern Gaṅgas—bull.
    2. Western Gaṅgas—elephant.
    3. Kerala kings—bow.
    4. Andhra kings—boar. At this time Andhras were subjected to the Eastern Cālukyas of Veṅgi.

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5. Mauryas of Koṅkaṅa—Boar.
6. Gurjaras— फलकंप्रतिहार्यम i.e. a tablet bearing the figure of Lakṣamaṇa.
7. Kośala and Avanti kings—Bull.
8. Pālas—Tārā.
9. Siṁhala—nāma probably meaning image. *EI*, Vol. XXXIV, pp. 125-28. Also pp. 125, 131.

66 मयूरकलापविरचितम् दर्पणध्वजम्

Indian Antiquary, Vol. VIII, p. 275.

67. *Indian Antiquary*, Vol. IX, p. 189.
68. *Ibid.*, Vol. VIII, p. 23.
69. *Gazetteer of Bombay Presidency*, Vol. I. 2, p. 387.
70. *Kaliṅgaṭṭu Parāni*, is a long poem, giving a graphic account of the expedition into the northern Kaliṅga country conducted by Karuṇākara, the Pallava king and prime minister of Cola emperor Kulottuṅga.
71. *Indian Antiquary*, Vol. XIX, p. 329; On the coins of Rājendra, the great Cola emperor is found the *dhvaja* emblem of the Colas, the Vyāghra or tiger seated triumphantly with the emblems of the two principal vanquished neighbours in front and behind, the bow of the Ceras and the fish of the Pāṇḍyas. Sivaramamurti, C., *Numismatic parallels of Kālidāsa*, fig. 12, p. 16. Also our Pl. 28.
72. *Ibid.*, pp. 331-32.
73. Elliot and Dowson, *The History of India*, Vol. I, p. 120.
74. *Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 173.
75. हयाश्चाश्रूणि मुञ्चन्ति ध्वजाः कम्पन्त्यकम्पिताः ।

MB, Virāta, 37.6.

76. ध्वजेषु च विधीयन्ते वायसास्तन्त शोभनम् ।

Ibid., 41.21.

77. केतुमूर्धनि गृध्रस्तु विलीनो दक्षिणामुखः

Ram, Yudha, 57.37.

अकाल एव हृत्कंपं भेजदेत्यपुरोकसः ।
ध्वजाग्रवर्तिनः कंकगृध्राश्चैव वकाः खगाः ॥

Brahmanda Pu 3.4 21.8.

78. अमङ्गल्यध्वजे तस्मिन्स्त्रीपूर्वे विशेषतः ।
न प्रहर्तुमभिप्सामि गृहीतेषुं कथंचन ॥

MB, Bhiṣma, 103.78.

79. *Veṇisamhāra*, p. 47.
80. *MB*, Udyoga, 140.5.

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81. *Rām*, Laṅkā, K. 59.
82. Fleet, J.F., *Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum*, Vol. III, p. 14.
83. *Rājataraṅgiṇī*, 3.77-78.
84. *Raghuvaṁśa*, IV.36.
85. तस्यवेलातटान्ते च जयस्तम्भ चकारस:

Kathāsaritasāgara, III.5.91.

86. *Kādambarī*, p. 223.
87. स्फाराकूपारतीरावल्लिनिहितजयस्तम्भविन्यस्तकीर्ति:
(who has deposted his fame in pillars of victory, which he erected in an uninterrupte d line on the shore of the great ocean) *South Indian Inscriptions*, pp. 163, 165.
88. *Ṛgveda*, X. 103.11.
89. *Aṣṭādhy āyī*, IV.3. 127.
90. गणान् सनन्दीन वृषभंध्वजांस्तान्
धराभिरेवाम्बुधरास्तु शैलान् ।
ते छाद्यमानासुखाण जालै:
विनायकाद्या वलिनाऽपि वशि: ॥

Vāmana Pu, 42.50.

91. *Śiśupālabadha*, III. 26.
92. *Epigraphica Carnatika*, VIII. Hi, 50.
93. *Indian Antiquary*, XIX, p. 243.
94. *Epigraphia Carnatika*, VI. Cm. 95.
95. *JBBRAS*, Vou IX, p. 296.

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6

The Dhvaja Symbols

According to Ralph L Beals a symbol may be defined as a physical phenomenon (such as for example, an object, artefact or sequence of sound) which has a meaning bestowed on it by those who use it. This meaning is arbitrary in the sense that it has no necessary relation to the physical properties of the phenomenon which bear it. Once a symbol comes into being it may be used as a sign. The meaning of the sign may be determined by observation of the contexts in which it is used.[1] Lessile White has gone a little further in concluding that "All human behaviour originates in the use of symbols. It was the symbol which transformed our anthropoid ancestors into man and made them human. All civilizations have been generated and are perpetuated only by the use of symbols. It is the symbol which transforms an infant of Homo sapiens into a human being. All human behaviour consists of, or is dependent upon the use of symbols. Human behaviour is symbolic behaviour; symbolic behaviour human behaviour."[2]

It is in the light of these observations that the use of symbols in religion and for that matter in *dhvajas* has to be viewed. In Indian religions each of the major gods was associated with specific animal or object which could represent him symbolically. To illustrate the point, Viṣṇu could be represented by Garuḍa, Śeśanāga, the Śrīvatsa mark or the Śālagrama stone. Śiva could be symbolised by the Vṛṣabha, the Triśūla, the Candrārdha, the Nāga and so on. The consorts of the gods, too, had their symbols—the trident or the skull of Kālī, the lotus or the swan of

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Sarasvatī, the cock of Kaumārī.[3] The sun and moon could be represented by the disk and crescent symbols, respectively. Among the planets Buddha was represented by a bow, Maṅgala by a triangle, Bṛhaspati by a lotus, Śani by scimitar, Rāhū by a fish and Ketu by a snake.

Ancient Indians made use of these symbols to invoke their revered deities for success in life or in the battle field. A brief review of the *dhvaja* motifs below will show that they were related to the religion of the people. Subject wise these *dhvaja* motifs can be classified under the following heads :

1. Animals and birds.
2. Plants and flowers.
3. Objects of nature.
4. Sacred objects.
5. Weapons.

Animals and birds

Most of the motifs used as *dhvajas* and *ketus* were chosen from amongst the animals and birds. A brief account of some of these widely used motifs is given below :

Garuḍa (Eagle)

The mythical Garuḍa is a bird of great antiquity.[4] The might of the eagle has been mentioned in the *Upaniṣads.*[5] The epics describe it as an embodiment of keen farsightedness. According to the *mahābhārata* once, Lord Viṣṇu pleased with the bravery and selflessness of Garuḍa offered him a boon. Garuḍa asked for a high perch and Viṣṇu gave him a place on his *dhvaja.*[6] Kṛṣṇa, an incarnation of Viṣṇu, carried Garuḍa on his standard and was, therefore, called *Garuḍa-dhvaja.*[7]

The *Garuḍa-dhvaja* was made by Viśvakarmā, the architect of the gods according to legend. The *yaṣṭi* or staff was said to be decorated with gems and precious metals. On the staff the resplendent Garuḍa, son of Vinatā, was placed.[8] This *dhvaja* was taken away by the heavenly nymphs when the chariot of Śrī Kṛṣṇa disintegrated at the end of the Mahābhārata War.[9]

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This great *dhvaja* of epic fame continued to be a model for the standards of Indian rulers through the ages. That a *Garuḍa-dhvaja* was erected in front of the shrine of Vāsudeva as early as the second century BC is borne out by excavations at Besnagar.[10] The art of Bhārhut represents persons carrying a standard identifiable as *Garuḍa-dhvaja*[11] (Pls. 8, 9). The Gupta rulers and some south Indian dynasties[12] also used this *dhvaja*.

Kapi

Hanumana, the son of Pavana or wind, is a conspicuous figure in the *Rāmāyaṇa* as well as the *Mahābhārata*. The monkey standard was the most widely known *dhvaja* in ancient India. Arjuna, the greatest of all the warriors described in the Mahābhārata, in fact, was known as *kapi-dhvaja* after his standard.[13]

Originally, the *Kapi-dhvaja* was created by Prajāpati Viśvakarmā after a long penance according to a story in the *Mahābhārata*. It was borne by king Soma during his successful encounters with the demons. It was passed on from Soma to Varuṇa along with the chariot. Varuṇa gave it to Arjuna[14] at Agni's request. It is significant that Agni as a *parivāra-devatā* is also described as bearing a *Kapi-dhvaja*.[15]

The staff of the *dhvaja* was made of gold. It was surmounted by the divine Vānara, wearing a ferocious expression. Some super natural beings also inhabited it.[16] It was so high that it never got stuck in trees and hills in spite of its large size.[17] The divine beings inhabiting it were the harbingers of victory in war.[18] It was adorned with divine images in small and big sizes.[19] This extraordinary *dhvaja* neither increased the weight of the chariot nor caused any hindrance to its smooth movement. Rainbow coloured banners adorned it.[20]

The *Kapi-dhvaja* was also called *Jaya-dhvaja* i e. victory standard.[21] *Vānara-ketu*[22] made a positive contribution to the victory of Arjuna in the battle field. The Vānara made such a terrible sound and so scared the enemies and shattered their morale that Arjuna could easily kill them.[23] At the end of the *Mahābhārata* war when the chariot of Arjuna disintegrated the *Vānara-ketu* also left[24] it. Some south Indian dynasties appear using *Vānara-ketu* at a later date.[25]

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Varāha (Boar)

In the *Ṛg-veda* the term *Varāha* is used in the sense boar to denote a sense of superiority and pre-eminence.[26] In the *Brāhamaṇa* and *Āraṇyaka* literature the boar is referred to as having lifted the earth from the depth of lower regions.[27] The Epic and the *Purāṇic* myths relate that Lord Viṣṇu in his boar incarnation saved the earth by raising it above the waters of deluge.[28]

In Hindu iconography *Śanaiscara*, the slow moving planet, is described as bearing a *Varāha-dhvaja*.[29] Sindhurāja Jayadratha, the epic warrior displayed Varāh on his standard.[30]

Vṛṣabha (Humped Bull)

Vṛṣabha denotes the sense of superiority and power. It was known to the Indus people and the vedic Āryans. The taurine zodiacal sign, symbolized by the bull, attended the birth of the Buddha.[31] In the Epics and *Purāṇas*, Vṛṣabha forms the *dhvaja* of Śiva. The deities associated with him such as Iśāna, Ardhrāja, Patira, Maheśvarī and Vīrabhadra, also are represented with *Vṛṣabha-dhvaja* in Hindu iconography.[32] Kṛpācārya the Kaurava general, bore a *Vṛṣabha-dhvaja*.[33] In a seal from Bhita dated around 3rd century AD one Gautamīputra is described as *Vṛṣabha-dhvaja*.[34] Another seal corresponding to the same period portrays a *dhvaja* with streamers.[35]

The bull figures prominently in the coins of ancient Indian republics. Some of these coins bear the legend *Arjunāyanānām jayah*.[36] In a seal of the Yaudheyas, deyicting a bull, there figures the legend *Yaudheyānām jaya mantra dhāraṇam*.[37] Later, the Pallavas of Kāñcī are described as using a *Vṛṣabha-dhvaja*.[38] King Samācāradeva, who ruled Bengal in 6th Century AD also patronised the bull standard.[39]

Hasti (Elephant)

In the *Ṛg-veda*, Hasti has the connotation of bravery and uncontrollable vigour.[40] In Indian mythology, it generally symbolises wisdom, self-sacrifice, strength and majesty. Its association with Gaṇeśa and Sarasvatī, the deities of learning, is symbolic of wisdom. It was the

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mount of Indra, the king of gods, and hence a symbol of glory and majesty.

In the *Mahābhārata*, king Bhoja, who fought on the side of the Kaurvas, bore a *Kunjara-dhvaja*.[41] Among the Saptamatrikas, Varāhi and Indrāṇi are described as bearing a *Gaja-dhvaja*.[42]

Siṁha (Lion)

In the *Ṛgveda*, Siṁha means very powerful and superior.[43] The mother goddess chose a Siṁha for her *vāhana* in her battle against the demons. In the *Rāmāyaṇa* the warrior, Meghanāda, also known as Indrajīta, is described as *Mṛgarāja-ketu*.[44] In the Mahābhārata war, the Pāṇḍava hero, Bhīma, and the Kaurava general, Bṛhadbala, carried a *Siṁha-dhvaja*.[45] In the *Matsya Purāṇa* the Sun and the Moon gods are said to have borne the golden lion as emblem in their *dhvajas*.[46] Among the Parivāradevatās of Viṣṇu, Varuṇa, Śrī, Buddha, Durgā, Agni, Kaumodaki and Toya are said to have borne *Siṁha-dhvaja*.[47]

Haṁsa (Swan)

In the *Ṛgveda Haṁsa* occurs as symbolic of the Aśvins, the Twin-gods.[48] At another place the god Soma is compared to a swan.[49]

Subsequently, supernatural power of discriminating the *soma* and the water come to be associated with it.[50]

In the *Mahābhārata*, Sahadeva, the youngest of the Pāṇḍava brothers, is described as *Haṁsa-dhvaja*.[51] Among the Parivāradevatās of Lord Viṣṇu, Sundarī, Svāhā, Saṁhlādinī, Rākā, Sinivāli, Apsarasa, Vipa and Brāhmī are described as *Haṁsa-dhvaja*.[52]

Śarabha (A mythical animal)

In the *Atharvaveda*, the Śarabha appears as a fabulous animal with two heads, two wings of resplendent beauty, eight legs of lion with sharp claws and a long tail.[53] According to the Purāṇas once Śiva assumed the form of Śarabha to cool down Viṣṇu, who in the Narasiṁha *avatāra* could not abate his anger. This symbol of immense power is widely represented in Hindu iconography.[54]

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Nakula, a Pāṇḍava hero, carried a *Śarabha-dhvaja* in war.[55] Aṅgāraka, i.e. the Planet Maṅgala, is depicted as *Śarabha-dhvaja* in iconography.[56]

Naga (Serpent)

Snake is the very embodiment of strength.[57] Yama, the God of death used a *Byāla-dhvaja*. The family deities of Lord Viṣṇu, viz. Vidhātā, Javana, Balida, Rāhū and Ketu are described as bearing a *Sarpa-dhvaja*.[58] Again a deity named Turhaṇa used an *Ahi-dhvaja*.[59] Duryodhana, the Kaurava king, also chose a snake as his *dhvaja* motif.[60]

Mayūra (Peacock)

The peacock has been widely used in Indian literature as a symbol of beauty and graceful gait. The *Ṛgveda* appreciates it for the beauty of its plumes.[61] It is represented on the *dhvaja* of Skanda, the army commander of the gods, who is called *Mayūra-dhvaja*, *Śikhī-dhvaja* and *Śikhī-ketu*.[62] Coins of Kumāragupta, the Gupta king bear the image of Skanda mounting a peacock.

Vṛṣasena, a king who fought for the Kauravas in the Mahābhārat war carried a *Mayūra dhvaja*.[63] Among the *Parivāradevatās* of lord Viṣṇu, Maya, Guha, Saptarohiṇī and Kaumārī are stated to bear the *Mayūra-dhvaja*.[64] In the *Kālikā Purāṇa*,[65] Vāṇa, the ruler of Śoṇitpura, is described as *Mayūra-dhvaja*.

Makara (Crocodile)

The Makara is identified as a shark, dolphin or crocodile.[66] Kāmadeva, the god of love, chose it for his *dhvaja*.[67] Among the deities of the Viṣṇu *Parivāra* Sindhu, Takṣaka and Madana bore a *Makara-dhvaja*.[68] Pradyumna, son of Śrī Kṛṣṇa also bore this *dhvaja*,[69] and the shrine at Besnagar dedicated to him was marked by a *Makara-dhvaja* as early as the second century B.C.[70] The *Mahābhārata* also described him as bearing a *Makara-dhvaja*.[71]

Kukkuṭa (Cock)

The cock has been regarded as an embodiment of the fighting

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spirit. It was the *vāhana* and *dhvaja* af Kārttikeya, the war lord of the gods. According to the *Śrītatyanidhi* he should be carrying a *dhvaja* on which a kukkuṭa is painted.[72] A *Kukkuṭa-dhvaja* has been discovered from Lalabhagat in UP. A kuṣāṇa king has represented Kumāra with the Kukkuṭa standard on his coins. Śastā, a deity of Dravidian origin, also bore Kukkuṭa as his *dhvaja*.[73]

Aśva (Horse)

Aśva is one that moves fast. It was a popular and highly regarded animal among the Āryans.[74] Great kings of India are known to have celebrated their supremacy over all the rulers with the performance of horse sacrifice.[75] *Haya-dhvaja* is represented on a coin of the Gupta period.[76] Among the family deities of Viṣṇu, Pataṅga, Prahlāda and Sūrya bore the *Aśva-dhvaja*.[77]

Gṛdha (Vulture)

Grdha means to covet or desire. In the *Ṛgveda* the word is used in a derogatory sense.[78] The term is generally applied to a vulture who is supposed to be very sharp eyed.

In the Mahābhārata Ghaṭotakacha is said to have borne a *Gṛdha-dhvaja*.[79] The *Matsya Purāṇa* describes that Rākṣasas as *Gṛdhradhvajah* i.e. having a *dhvaja* with a vulture emblem.[80]

Some animals of lesser importance also figure as *dhvaja-ketus*. In the *Matsya Purāṇa* the yakṣas are said to be *Tāmrolūkadhvajah*, i.e. having a standard with red owl as emblem.[81] The owl occurs in the *Ṛgveda* as a bird which can see better at night than in day time. It thus symbolises the concept of darkness.[82] Śṛgāla (Jackal) found a place in the standard of Alāyudha, an epic warrior.[83] Mahiṣa (Buffalo) was represented in the *dhvaja* of Yama, the God of death. Mahīdhara and Vidyādhara two minor deities also bore it on their *dhvajas*.[84] Kūrma (tortoise) formed the *dhvaja* of goddess Gaṅgā.[85] It was a symbol of perseverance and Lord Viṣṇu assumed the form of kūrma in one of his incarnations.[86] Goddess Yamunā's *dhvaja* displayed a matsya (fish).[87] Jeyṣṭha, a malevolent deity, bore the *Kāka-dhvaja*.[88]

Two minor deities Sura and Vatsarasa bore Kapota (pigeon) and

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Śaśa (rabbit) respectively on their *dhvajas*.[89] Asura, a minor deity carried a *Khara-dhvaja*.[90] Kṛkalāsa (lizard) formed the *dhvaja* of Niṛṛuti, also a minor deity.[91] Mṛga (deer) was used in the *dhvaja* of Jāmbava[92] and Aniruddha.[93] God Soma used a Kulīra (crab) in his *dhvaja*.[94]

Plants and flowers

The plant world also provided for some of the *dhvaja-ketus*. Important motifs of this category are as follows :

Tāla (Palm tree)

Tāla was a very popular tree in ancient India.[95] It was also called *dhvajadruma*, *tarurāja*, *dīrghapatra* etc. The name suggests that it was held in high esteem. Its wood was considered sacred and was widely used to make the *Dhvaja-daṇḍa*. The tāla thus symbolised a sense of superiority and sanctity.

Bhīṣma, the greatest of the Kaurava warriors bore a *Tāla-dhvaja*[96] God Acyuta also bore a *Tāla-dhvaja*.[97]

Kovidāra (a tree)

A beautiful tree with supernatural qualities, the kovidāra tree has also been referred to as Mandāra and Pārijāta in literature.[98]

Bharata, who ruled Ayodhyā for fourteen years in the absence of his brother Rāma, displayed a *kovidāra-dhvaja*.[99] It was probably the dynastic *dhvaja* of the kings of Ayodhyā. Dhṛṣṭadyumna, a great warrior, who joined the Mahābhārata war on the side of Pāṇḍavas, also bore a *Kovidāra-dhvaja*.[100]

Puṣpa (flower)

Flowers were used in the worship of gods and hence treated as sacred. Dhatā, Puṣparakṣita and Haleśa, among the family deities of Viṣṇu, were known as *Puṣpa-dhvaja*.[101]

Kuṣa (grass)

Kuṣa grass is widely used in Brāhmaṇic rituals. Even in the Vedic

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age it was laid on the floor of the sacrificial chamber before the beginning of a ritual.[102] sanctity attached to Kuṣa grass is also reflected in a legend about Garuḍa's exploits. It is said that when he brought the pot of ambrosia from heaven to his step brothers, the snakes, he placed it on *Kuṣa* grass. Sages like Vaikhānasa, Vāmana, Bṛhaspati and Mudgala used it for their *dhvaja*.[103] *Kūrcā* which was probably the same as *Kuṣa* used by sages like Sanātana, Mārkeṇḍeya, Tapasa and Nārada for their *dhvajas*.[104]

Padma (Lotus)

Padma was considered sacred both by the Brāhmaṇas and the Buddhists. It symbolised purity, learning and fortune.[105] Dhanada the lord of wealth, bore a *Padma-dhvaja*.[106]

Nāla (Lotus stalk)

The word Nāla is symbolic of softness and delicacy. The mythical land of the Kinnaras abounded in lotuses and this probably explains their association with *Nāla-dhvaja*.[107]

Objects of Nature

Objects of nature provided for some *dhvaja-ketus*. These did not, however, become much popular owing to the problem of actual representation associated with them. Some of these objects are detailed below :

Agni (Fire)

In the Vedas Agni is described as the god of fire and light, lord of heaven and earth and the soul of all. Fire purifies and therefore, symbolises purity. Among the Parivāradevatās, Bhṛti and Yajus appear as bearing *Agni-Dhvaja*.[108] Anala was a *dhvaja* of Nanda.[109]

Megha (Cloud)

Yakṣa chose it for a *dhvaja* motif.[110] The association of the Megha and the Yakṣa is well brought out in the *Meghadūta* of Kālidāsa.

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Chandra (Crescent)

In the *Ṛgveda* Indu or Soma appears as a powerful god, capable of granting strength, glory and renown. "O Soma, set thou upon us the glory of a hundred men, the great renown of mighty chiefs."[111] In the Purāṇas it is described as one of the preserves of Śiva obtained from *Samudra-manthana* i.e. churning of the ocean.

A 5th century terra-cotta plaque from Ahicchatra, displayed in the National Museum represents a crescent standard along side a warrior (pl. 19). Some Gupta kings patronised this *dhvaja* type probably as a mark of respect to Lord Śiva (pl. 14).

Sacred Objects

Some objects associated with religious rituals were also used as *dhvaja* motifs. Some better known motifs from this category are described below :

Vedikā (Altar)

The term *vedikā* was applied to a raised platform built for the purpose of worship and sacrifice by the Vedic Āryans. The *dhvaja* of Droṇācārya, the Kaurava warrior, bore the symbol of a *vedika*[112] and a *kamaṇḍalu.*

Yūpa (Post)

The Yūpa was a vital part of the *vedikā* complex in the Vedic religion. It was a post set at a corner of the sacrificial altar, to which the victim was tied.[113] Because of this association, the *yūpa* acquired an aura of sanctity. In the Epic war Bhūriśravā, a prominent warrior on the Kaurava side, carried a *yūpa-dhvaja.*[114]

Mṛdaṅga (Drum)

The *Mṛdaṅga* was probably the same as Vedic dundubhi.[115] Its thunderous notes meant encouragement to the friends and terror to the foes. Yudhisthira, the eldest of the Pandava brothers represented a pair of *Mṛdaṅgas* for his *dhvaja,*[116] called *Nanda* and *upananda.* These *Mṛdaṅgas*

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generated a melodious note without any human effort.

Kapāla (Skull)

The *kapāla*, generally speaking is a symbol of Śaivite significance. It was used by Śiva as a receptacle for food and drink. Rāvaṇa who was a devout worshipper of Śiva adopted this motif for his *dhvaja*.[117]

Sruva (Ladle)

Sruva was used for pouring oblations into the sacrificial fire. It was an important attribute of Lord Brahmā.[118] It was considered sacred and hence its use as *dhvaja* motif. Mitra, Śukra, Atharva, Maṇika and Tumburu among the Parivāradevatās of Viṣṇu are reported as bearing *Sruva-dhvaja*.[119]

Juhu (Wooden Ladle)

The Juhu was a crescent-shaped wooden ladle used for pouring the sacrificial butter into the fire.[120] Sage Atri chose to represent it on his *dhvaja*.[121]

Kalaśa (vessel)

The overflowing vessel as a symbol of plenty and auspiciousness has a hoary antiquity. Śiva who generally used a *Vṛṣabha dhvaja* is associated with *Kalaśa-dhvaja* as a *parivāradevatā* in a Viṣṇu temple.[122] In the *Vāmana Purāṇa* Gaṇeśa (i.e. Lord of the Gaṇas) is also spoken of as *Kalaśa-dhvaja*.[123]

Veda (Sacred book)

Veda denoted the sacred book of Knowledge.[124] God Viṣṇu bore a *Veda-dhvaja*.[125]

Saṁkha (conch)

Saṁkha has always been treated as a sacred object in Brāhmaṇic religion. In the *Mahābhārata* age all the warriors of renown carried a *saṁkha* to serve as trumpet in war.[126] Among the deities of the Viṣṇu

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family Varuṇa, Dhvaja, Maruta and Vasu were always represented with a *Saṁkha-dhvaja* in the temples.[127]

Sṛṅga (Horn)

It symbolised the concept of superiority or elevation. In the *Ṛgveda* the term is used in this sense.[128] Viśvaksena, a minor god bore a *Sṛṅga-dhvaja.*[129]

Dhūma (smoke)

Dhūma is symbolic of sacrificial fire and hence sacred. In the *Harivaṁśa Purāṇa* Agni is described as bearing a *Dhūma-ketu* on his chariot. The *Viṣṇudharmottara Purāṇa* also describe him as mounted on a chariot, bearing a *Dhūma-dhvaja.*[130] In the *Vaikhānasa Āgama*, the deity Caṇḍa, Mitra, Cacracūḍi, Cakra and Caṇḍa are also referred to as *Dhūma-dhvaja.*[131]

Weapons

Weapon was again a popular *dhvaja* motif. Cakra, Dhanusa, Khaṭvāṅga, Bhiṇḍipāla, Sara and Khaṇga which were used as *dhvaja* motifs are described below :

Cakra

In the *Ṛg-veda* the *cakra* or the wheel symbolises the sun and the concept of light. It is also identified with the supreme moral order in the form of *Dharmacakra.* In the Buddhist tradition the *cakra* is symbolic of the Buddha and the preaching of the first sermon i.e. *Dharmacakra-pavartana.* In art, *Cakra-dhvaja* first appears in the third century BC with the use by Aśoka to represent the Buddhist concept of *Cakravartin* i.e., turning of the wheel of law by the Buddha.[132]

The *Cakra-dhvaja* had come into use among rulers in the Epic age.[133] In historical times, the earliest evidence is provided by some die-stuck coins from Avanti. They represent on the obverse a noble personality, probably a king, with a *Cakra-dhvaja* beside him. The Cakra or disc of the sun is depicted with fierce rays issuing from all sides.[134] The wide use of *Cakra-dhvaja* in the art of Bhārhuṭ and Sāncht suggests its

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popularity.[135] The Gupta king, Rāmagupta,[136] probably chose to bear it as a symbol of Viṣṇu. Its popularity among rulers is evident also from the art of Ajaṇṭā (Pls. 21, 22).

Dhanuṣa (Bow)

The bow enjoys a high esteem in the Indian tradition. In the *Ṛgveda* the bow was considered a symbol of victory.[137] The Ceras who ruled over the Kerala country in the third century B.C. bore a *Dhanuṣa-dhvaja.*[138]

Khaṭvāṅga (Club)

The *Khaṭvāṅga* one of the principal weapons associated with Śiva was a curious sort of club made up of the bone of the forearm or the leg, to the end of which a human skull was attached. The Pallavas of Kāñcī are stated to have used *Khaṭvāṅga-dhvaja* in addition to their *Vṛṣabha-dhvaja.*[139]

Bhiṇḍipāla (Spear)

Bhiṇḍipāla was a weapon like a short javelin or arrow thrown with the hand or shot through a tube. God Vivasvana carried *Bhiṇḍipāla-dhvaja.*[140]

Śara (Arrow)

The *śara* was the most popular and sacred weapon of the Vedic Āryans. The Sātavāhana ruler Gautamīputra Sātakarṇī displayed an arrow fitted in a bow on his coins as a sign of prowess.[141] It is likely that he used it in his *dhvaja* also. The minor deities Kiṣkindhā, Sāraṅga and Tīrtha bore a *Śara-dhvaja.*[142]

Khaṅga (Sword)

The sacrificial knife or sword was called a *khaṅga.* Gaviṣṭhā, Kuhū, Anumiti and Sunandā, the family deities of Viṣṇu temple bore a *Khaṅga-dhvaja.*[143]

Vajra (Thunderbolt)

Vajra was the most famous weapen of the Vedic war lord, Indra.

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It was created out of the bones of ṛiṣi Dadhīci to destroy the otherwise invincible demons. The *vajra* symbolised invincibility in war. In the *Kālikā Purāṇa* Narāka, the ruler of Prāgjoyotiṣa, is said to have a *Vajra-dhvaja*.[144] Narāka probably preferred this weapon for his *dhvaja* because it was associated with Indra the lord of eastern quarters.

Sītā (furrow), Viyadgati (motion in air), Cūḍā (tuft of hair), Bhūta (spirit), Piśāca (goblin) and Śukra (venus) are some other *dhvaja* types referred to in the *Vaikhānasa Āgama*.[145] It is not always easy to explain whether a particular *dhvaja* motif was associated with a god or not but it is certain that some religious symbolism was imputed to each of them.

Summary

The study of the institution of the *dhvaja* in ancient India leads us to some interesting conclusions. It has now been established that the origin of the *dhvaja* lies in the totem and not in the vedic *yūpa* or *stambha* as held by many scholars. It is also significant that in the scheme of *dhvaja* the *ketu* held an all important position and not the *yaṣṭi*.

Dhvaja was intimately connected with the religion of the people and therefore, the motifs used as the *dhvaja-ketu* were invariably religious objects of importance. The wide occurrence of motifs like garuḍa, vānara, cakra, simha, vṛṣabha *etc.* in the *dhvajas* of ancient Indian rulers amply demonstrates this. In fact there is no ancient *dhvaja* motif which cannot be explained in terms of religion.

Owing to its religious symbolism and supposed protective power the *dhvaja* inspired great reverence.

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2. *Philosophy of Science*, p. 451.
3. To illustrate the point the Goddess was represented in various forms by people seeking various boons, on their *dhvajas* is clearly stated in the *Devī Purāṇa*.
सिंहा रुद्रा ध्वजे यस्य नृपस्य रिपुहा उमा।

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द्वारस्था पूज्यते वत्स न तस्य रिपुजं भयम् ॥
कपिसंस्था महामाया सर्व्वशत्रुविनाभिना ।
वृजे यथेप्सितं दद्यात्कलशे श्रेययुत्तमम् ॥
हेसे विद्यार्थ कामास्तु वर्हिणे सुतमिष्टता ।
गरुत्मगा महामायां सर्व्वरोगविनाभिना ॥
महिषस्था महामारी शमते ध्वजसंस्थिता ।
करिस्था सर्व्वकार्य्येषु नृपैः कार्य्या त्रिशूलिनी ॥
यद्मस्था चर्च्चिका रोप्या धर्मकामार्थ मोक्षदा ।
प्रेतस्था सर्व्वभयदा नित्यं पशु निपातनत् ॥
पूजिता देवराजेन्द्र नीलोत्पलकरावरा ।
भवते सिद्धकामस्य चित्ताग्रे संव्यवस्थिता ॥

Devī Pu, 23.12-17.

4. The concept of Garuḍa seems to have evolved in the Vedic Age. सुपर्ण गरुत्मान *Ṛg-veda*, I. 164. 46; According to J.N. Banerjea, the sun traversing through the wide firmament of the sky could be easily conceived as a mythical bird having beautiful wings. *Development of Hindu Iconography*, p. 50.

   In the Vedas, *Garuḍa* is generally associated with god Savitar on whose command he brought *soma* from the moon (*Ṛgveda*, III.43.7, VII, 26.6 etc; also *Prācīna Carita Kośa*, pp. 182-83). The oft repeated story that Garuḍa stole the nectar from the gods with a view to seek the release of his mother Vinatā from the slavehood of Kadru, as met in the Epics and the *Purāṇas* seems to be an amplification of this legend.

5. Sivaramamurti, C., *Birds and Animals in Indian Sculpture*, p. 31.

6. ध्वजं च चक्रे भगवानुपरि रथास्यसीतितम्

   MB, Adi. 29.16.

7. *Śiśupālavadha*, III, 23, V.13.

8. विश्वकर्मकृता दिव्या नानारत्नविभूषिता ।
   उच्छ्रितेव रथे माया ध्वजयष्टिरहश्यत् ॥

   MB, Sauptika, 13.3.

9. *MB*, Mausala, 4.5.

10. Banerjea, J.N., *Development of Indian Iconography*, p. 92; Also *Indian Archaeology*, 1965-66, pp. 23-24.

11. Altekar, A.S., *The Gupta Gold Coins in the Bayana Hoard*. pls.

12. Fleet, J.F., *Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum*, Vol. III, p. 151 fn. 3.

13. रथं कपिलक्षणम्

    MB, Ādi, 55.37

    In the Vanaparva there is a story that during the exile of Pāṇḍavas, Hanumāna when he chanced to meet Bhima assured the latter that in the impending war, he will make terrible sounds staying in the *dhvaja* of Arjuna. *MB*, Vana, 150.

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14. *MB*, Ādi, 216; Elsewhere it is stated that Viśvakarmā Tvaṣṭā and Prajāpati created it in coordination with Indra. *MB*, Udyoga, 55.7: In Bhiṣma Parva it is related that this was created by Viśvakarmā at the command of Indra.

आदित्यपथगः केतुस्वस्याद्य् तमनोरमः
शासनात्पुरुहूतस्य निर्मितो विश्वकर्मणा

MB, Bhiṣma, 46.42.

15. *VA*, *op. cit.*

16. तापनीया सुरुचिरा ध्वजयष्टिरनुत्तमा ।।
तस्यां तु वानरो दिव्यः सिंहशार्दूल लक्षणः ।
विनर्दन्निव तत्रस्थः सस्थितो मूर्धन्यशोभत् ।।
ध्वजेभूतानि तत्रासन विविधानि महान्ति च ।
नदिन रिपुसैन्यानां येजां संज्ञा प्रणश्यति ।।

MB, Ādi, 216.12.14.

17. न सज्जते शैलवनस्पतिभ्यः ।
उर्ध्वं तिर्यग्योजनमात्ररूपः ।।
श्रीमान्ध्वजः कर्ण धनंजयस्य ।
समुच्छ्रितः पावकतुल्यरूपः ।।

MB, Udyoga, 140.5.

18. दित्यानि भूतानि भयावहानि ।
दृश्यन्ति चैवात्र भयानकानि ।।

MB, Udyoga, 140.4.

19. ध्वजे हि तस्मिन रूपाणि चक्रस्ते देवमायया ।
महाद्यमानि दिव्यानि महान्ति लघूनि च ।।

MB, Udyoga, 55.8.

20. इन्द्रायुधसवर्णाभिः पताकाभिरलंकृतः ।

MB, Bhīṣma, 46.43.

21. जयध्वजोदृश्यते पाण्डवस्य, समुच्छ्रितो वानरराज उग्रः ।

MB, Udyoga 140.3 also Bhīṣma 67.3-4.

22. वानरो रोचमानश्च केतुः केतुमतां वरः ।

MB, Udyoga, 53.13.

23. विजयस्य ध्वजस्यश्च नादान मोक्ष्यामि दारुणान् ।
शत्रूणां ते प्राणहराः नित्युक्तवान्तर धीयत ।।

MB, Vana, 150.15.

24. कपिरन्तर्दधे दिव्यो ध्वजो गाण्डविधन्वनः ।

MB, Śalya, 61.12.

25. Fleet, J.F., *Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum*, Vol. III, p. 151, Fn. 3.

26. *Rgveda*, X, 28.4.

27. Thomas, P., *Epics, Myths and Legends of India*, p. 17.

28. *Ibid.*

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29. *Vaikhānsa Āgama, EHI*, Vol. 1.2, Appx. A.
30. *MB*, Droṇa, 80.20.
31. The bull representing the taurine sign thus became a symbol of Buddha's birth. It is widely used to convey this idea in the art of Aśoka, the great Mauryan king. It was a symbol of great significance even in proto-historic India is suggested by wide occurrence of bull in Mohenjo-daro seals.
32. *EHI, op. cit.*
33. *MB*, Bhīṣma, 17.27.
34. *ASIAR*, 1911-12, p. 51.
35. *Ibid.*, Pl. XVIII, 29.
36. Allan, J., *Catalogue of the coins of ancient India*, p. 82 Intro.
37. Cunningham, A., *JNSI*, Vol. XVIII. 1, pp. 46-48.
38. Meenakshi, C., *Administration and Social Life under the Pallavas*, p. 41.
39. Altekar, A.S., *The Coinage of the Gupta Empire*, Pl. XIX a.
40. *Ṛgveda*, VIII. 33.8; I.64.7.
41. *MB*, Droṇa, 47.8.
42. *VA, op. cit.*
43. *Ṛgveda*, 68.8, III. 26.5. There is a view that lion came into vogue in the Indian art in the fourth century BC owing to west-Asian influence.
44. *Rāmāyaṇa*, Yudha, 59.15.
45. *MB*, Bhīṣma, III.31.
46. *Matsya Pu*, 148.96.
47. *VA, op. cit.*
48. *Ṛgveda*, VIII. 35.8.
49. *Ibid.*, IX. 32.3.
50. "The curious power of separating soma from water is attributed to it in the White *Yajurveda*, as that of extracting milk from water is in the later poetry. The latter faculty belongs to the curlew (Krauñca), according to the *sāmaveda*". Macdonell, A.A., *A History of Sanskṛit Literature*, p. 150.
51. *MB*, Droṇa, 23.87 (GP).
52. *VA*, op. cit.
53. Monior Williams, *Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, p. 1057.
54. *EHI.*, Vol. II.1, p. 171 ff.
55. *MB*, Droṇa, 23.86 (GP).
56. *VA*, op. cit.
57. In the words of Macdonell "Among the noxious animals of the *Ṛgveda* the serpent is most prominent. This is the form which the powerful demon, the foe of Indra, is believed to possess. The serpent also appears as a divine being . . . representing the beneficient side of the character of the serpent Vritra. In the later Vedas the serpents are mentioned as a class of semi-divine being along with the Gandharvas

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and others, and in the Sūtras offerings to them are prescribed. There is reason to believe that when the Āryans spread over India, the land of serpents, they found the cult diffused among the aborigines and borrowed it from them. *A History of Sanskrit Literature*, P. 110-111. In the Vedas they represent the destructive forces. Śiva, the Lord of destruction, bore it on his person. In mythology Nāgas are spoken of as the off-springs of Kadru, the wife of sage Kaśyapa.

58. *V.A., op. cit.*
59. *Ibid.*
60. *MB*, Virāṭa, 50.12.
61. *Ṛgveda*, III. 45.1.
62. Gopinath Rao explains *Śikhī-dhvaja* as the banner made of peacock feathers. *EHI*, II.2, p. 429.
63. *MB*, Droṇa, 80.16.
64. *VA*, op. cit.
65. *Kālikā Pu*, I.37.
66. In the Hindu Zodiac it represents the sign of capricornus and is depicted with the head and fore-lags of an antelope and the body and tail of a fish. Varuṇa, the Lord of Oceans chose it for his *Vāhana*.
67. According to the *Śilparatna* on the right of Manmatha there should be the figure of his standard-bearer having the face of a horse carrying the *makara* banner. कार्यो मकरध्वजधारकः *EHI*, Vol. I, pp. 276-277. Manmatha is actually represented with his *dhvajin*, a dwarf on his right in a sculpture at Kalebedu, *Ibid.*, Pl. LXXXII.
68. *VA*, op. cit.
69. *Viṣṇudharmottara Pu*, III. 3.54.
70. *Indian Archaeology*, 1955-56, p. 23.
71. *MB*, Vana, 18.2.
72. *EHI*, Vol. II.2, p. 441; Knmāra was also known as *Mayūra-dhvaja*.
73. *Ibid.*, P. 488; In an another work he is said to bear a *Hasti-dhvaja*.
74. *Ṛgveda*, X. 156.3; I.162.
75. Indian rulers of the later period continued to perform this sacrifice as a mark of their suzerainty over the earth. On some of the Sātavāhana coins a horse is represented before the sacrificial post. In *Aśvamedha* type of Samudragupta the horse is shown standing near the sacrificial post. It also bears the legend अश्वमेध पराक्रमः
76. Altekar, A.S., *The Gupta Gold Coins in the Bayana Hoard* Pl. XXXII. 14.
77. *VA*, op. cit.
78. *Ṛgveda*, VII. 104.22.
79. *MB*, Drona 142.36.
80. *Matsya Pu*, 148.88.
81. *Matsya Pu*, 148.90.

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82. *Ṛgveda*, VII. 104.17; Also VII 104.22. Its association with Lakṣmi the goddess of wealth signifies the blinding potency of wealth.
83. *MB*, Droṇa 151.18.
84. *VA*, op cit.
85. Thomas, P., *Epics, Myths and Legends of India*, p. 16.
86. *Ibid.*
87. *VA*, op. cit.
88. *EHI*, Plate CXXI.
89. *VA*, op. cit.
90. *Ibid.*
91. *Ibid.*
92. *Ibid.*
93. *Viṣṇudhramottara Pu*, III.3.54.
94. *VA*, op. cit.
95. *Sabdakalpadruma*, Vol. II, p. 610.
96. *MB*, Bhiṣma, 16.41.
97. *Viṣṇudharmottara Pu*, III. 3.54.
98. *Harivaṁśa* Appx. I.29.
99. *Rāmāyaṇa*, Ayodhyā, 96.18.
100. *MB*, Bhiṣma, 50.89.
101. *VA*, op. cit.
102. *Ṛgveda*, VII. 33.1.
103. *VA*, op. cit.
104. *Ibid.*
105. देव्याम च मस्तके पद्मं तथा कार्थं मनोहरम सौभाग्यं तद् विजानीहि
Viṣṇudharmottara, III. 82.8.
106. *VA, op. cit.*
107. *VA, op. cit.*
108. *VA*, op. cit.
109. *Ibid.*
110. *Ibid.*
111. *Ṛgveda*, 1.43.7.
112. *MB*, Virāṭa, 53.1.
113. *Ṛgveda*, X. 70.10.
114. *MB*, Droṇa, 24.53.
115. In the *Ṛgveda* it figures as an esteemed instrument. "Send forth thy voice a loud through earth and heaven and let the world in all its breadth regard thee; o drum, accordant with the gods and Indra, drive thou afar, yea very far, our foeman. Thunder out strength and fill us full and vigours, Yea thunder forth and drive away

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all dangers. Drive hence, O war drum, drive away misfortune; thou art the first of Indra; show thy firmness. *Ṛgveda*, VI. 47. 29-30.

116. *MB*, Droṇa, 23.84 (GP).
117. *Rāmāyaṇa*, Yudha, 100.14.
118. *EHI*, Vol. II. 2, p. 511.
119. *VA*, op. cit.
120. *Ṛgveda*, X. 109.5.
121. *VA*, op. cit.
122. *Ibid.*
123. ततो गणेश: कलश ध्वज़स्तु प्रासेन राहुं हृदये विभेद

Vāmana Pu, 42.35.

124. The term veda has also been explained as a bundle of grass used in sacrifices. Griffith, Ralph T.H., *The Hymns of the Ṛgveda*, p. 408.
125. *VA*, op. cit.
126. पाञ्चन्जयं हृषीकेशो देवदतं धनेजय: ।

पौण्ड्रंदध्यौ महाशंख भीमकर्मा व्रकोदर: ।।

MB, Bhīṣma, 23. 15.16.

Pāñcajanya is said to have been made out of a bone of the domon Pāñcajanya killed by Viṣṇu.

127. *VA*, op. cit.
128. *Ṛgveda*, V. 59.3.
129. *VA*, op. cit.
130. Gopinath Rao, *EHI*, II. 2. p. 524 Appx. 254.
131. *VA*, op. cit.
132. According to Coomaraswamy "The wheel (*cakra*) which later on becomes the mark of Cakravartin, the discus of Viṣṇu, and the Buddhist Wheel of Law originally represented the Sun." *History of Indian and Indonesian Art*, P. 41. Also see Agrawala, V.S , *Cakradhvaja*, p. 1.ff; John Irwin *The Burlington Magazine*, No. 871, p. 631
133. *MB*, Droṇa, 23.60.
134. Sivaramamurti, C., *Numismatic Parallels of Kālidāsa* fig. 18, p. 23.
135. Cunningham, A., *Bhārhut*, Pl. XIII, Also Pls. XXXI, XXXIB, Marshall, J., *Sānchī*, Pl. 64 Also Pls. 18, 92, 95, 97; Fergusson, J., *Tree and Serpent Worship*, pp. 71, 122, 223.
136. Altekar, A.S., *The Coinage of the Gupta Empire*, Pls. I-V. In 7th century a king named Jayanāga is also met with using *Cākradhvaja.*, *ibid.*, pl. XIX A. 11
137. "With bow let us win kine, with bow the battle, with bow be victorious our hot encounters. The bow brings grief and sorrow to the foeman, armed with the bow

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may we subdue all regions . . . may the two bow-ends starting swift asunder scatter in unison, the foes who hated us."

Ṛgveda, VI.75 1-7.

138. *Epigraphia Indica*, Vol. XXXIX, p. 137.
139. Sircar, D.C., *Indian Epigraphy*, P. 154.
140. *VA*, op. cit.
141. Sivaramamurti, C., *Numismatic parallels of Kālidāsa*, pp. 4-5.
142. *VA*, op. cit.
143. *VA*, op. cit.
144. *Kālikā Purāṇa*, I 23.44.
145. *VA*, op. cit.

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7

The Dhvaja in Medieval India[1]

The basic principles behind the concept of the *dhvajas* evolved in ancient India continued more or less unchanged in medieval India. This was so in spite of the fact that a new factor entered the Indian political scene with the Turkish invasions in early 13th century.

The rulers of the country, irrespective of their creed, attributed supernatural powers and sanctity to their standards. Of course, the Muslim rulers sought inspiration from the Islamic traditions of western Asia and the Rajput rulers drew upon their ancient mythology but in both cases it was religious symbolism that inspired the design of *dhvaja*.

For the sake of convenience, this study of *dhvaja* in medieval India will be attempted under three heads viz. the Rajput, the Sultanate and the Mughal.

Rajput Dhvajas

The Rajputs continued the use of *dhvaja* as a symbol of royalty in the age-old fashion. Bappa Rawal, the ancestor of the Ranas of Chittor claiming descent from Sūrya carried a *dhvaja* bearing the golden sun on a crimson field.[2] This *dhvaja* was to be a witness to many ups and downs in the fortunes of Chittor. After the death of Rana Sanga, it passed on to the defender of Chittor.[3]

The standard witnessed the battle of Haldighati. With the war in

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progress and the odds heavily against Rana Pratap, the Jhala Chief Mana sieged upon the standard of Mewar and raising the standard over his own head drawing after him the brunt of the battle, and relieving pressure on the prince who was able to leave the battle-field.[4] With this strategem of displaying over his head the sun-standard of Mewar, the Jhala chief saved Pratap, the son of Chittor.

The origin of the standard of the Rathors of Kanauja can be traced to the 5th century A.D. It was named *Kāma-dhvaja* (the flag of Cupid) and was instituted by Nayana Pāla the founder of the dynasty. The descendants of Nayana Pāla bore the patronymic '*Kāma-dhvaja*' for a long time.[5]

The Cālukya king Jayasiṁha carried a *Kukkuṭa-dhvaja* in the forefront, while marching to a war.[6]

The use of *dhvajas* and *paṭākās* in early medieval India is also reflected in the art of the age. In the sun temple of Koṇārka a high dignitary, probably a king, equipped with a bow is seen followed by a *dhvajin* in the Sānchī fashion.[7] The horse frieze there represents triangular flags or *patākā* carried by mounted persons. The flag-bearers are accompanied by a soldier and tom-tom bearer, all mounted.[8] The scene probably represents a military march.

The successors of some of the medieval Rajput rulers who survived till recently as Indian princely states, continued to bear the standards of their ancestors. The origin of the Bikaner State *dhvaja*, for example, which had been in use till recently can be traced back to the medieval times. It comprised two colours, saffron and red, and was superimposed with a kite.[9] The red colour symbolised Karṇejī, the local name for the mother goddess Durgā, the tutelary deity of the State. The saffron was symbolic of Śrī Lakṣmī Nāthajī, or Lord Viṣṇu. The superimposed kite was also related with the tutelary deity Karṇejī.[10] In the 17th century the motto "*Jaya Jaṅgla Dhara Bādshāha*" was added to the standard to commemorate the exploits of the then ruler of Bikaner, Maharaja Karanshinghji, in a jungle war in which he foiled the plans of Aurangzeb to kill some Rajput rulers.

The Jodhpur state standard '*Pañcaraṅga*' comprised five colours *viz.*, salmon-pink, white, red, yellow and green (Pl. 36).[11] It was charged

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with a kite as seen in the Bikaner *dhvaja*. The bird represented the winged goddess Durgā who, it is believed, assumed this form on several occasions to assist the state.

The origin of the Sandur state *dhvaja* goes back to 1469,[12] the year when two early rulers of the family, Karna Sinha and his son Bhim Sinha, distinguished themselves by scaling the fort of Khelna in Konkan with the aid of a rope tied around a 'Ghorpad', the common monitor lizard of the south. For this extraordinary feat, Bhim Sinha acquired the title 'Raja Ghorpade Bahadur' and the state adopted for their colours a Ghorpad embroidered on a black and white background. In course of time, the family itself came to be known as 'Ghorpade'.

The Bhonsle kings of Nagpur displayed two standard types viz. *Zarī-paṭkā* and *Bhagvā-zendā*. Shahji, the father of Shivaji used a Bhagvā-zendā. Shivaji added the *Zarī-paṭkā* symbol of royalty.[13]

Sambhaji, a scion of the Bhonsle family carried a *Parijāta-dhvaja*,[14] i.e. a saffron standard, in the Rajput tradition. In the military expeditions of Shahuji the imperial *dhvaja* was carried in forefront, behind the Rājā, under the protection of guards.[15] The younger branch of the house of Shivaji founded by his son, Rajaram, also displayed the *Bhagvā Zendā* and the *Zarī-paṭkā* (Pls 40, 41).[16] Raghoba, a later Maratha, bore a small and swallow-tailed standard of crimson or gold tissues with gold fringes and tassels.[17] It was carried in front of him during the marches. Standards were invariably displayed in Maratha camps.[18] The *Śivabharata*, a poetic composition of later 17th century, refers to standards being carried in the forefront of a marching army.[19]

The Marathas also observed the custom of rewarding senior generals for acts of gallantry by bestowing *Zarī-Paṭkā* on them. Their infantry which formed the vanguard in the battle array was always led by a holder of this honour.[20]

The use and display of standards by the Hindu dynasties of medieval India indeed followed the traditional lines. The rise of the crescent on the Indian political horizon and the consequent intercourse between the indigenous and Islamic culture, however, brought in some new customs with regard to the use of standards and flags in war and in peace.

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The Sultanate Standards[21]

Prophet Muhammad recognised the need of standard for troops engaged in battle and adopted the Roman Eagle for the purpose.[22] The later Caliphs (Abbasids) displayed a black flag with the legend "Muhammad is the apostle of god" in white. Flags by various factions differed in colour and at times in the wording of the legend; thus the Abbasid colour was black, the Almi green, and the Umayyad white.[23]

The flags of the Sultanate period of Indian history should be viewed against this background. The leaders of the Arab invasion of India in the 8th century AD fought under their own standards. Muhammad-Bin-Kasim, during the seige of Debal, unfurled his standards and each body of his warriors was arrayed under its own standard.[24] The Ghaznavid infantry also marched with their standards in the forefront.[25] Mahmud of Ghazne carried the Abbasid black standard. He bore on it the crescent as a sign of his rule and domination over India.[26] His successors also followed him, and patronised the Abbasid standard. His grandson Ibrahim (11th century), however, bore a lion device on his standard. The lion standard continued to be popular with the Ghaznavid rulers for a long time though one Bahman Shah is reported using a crescent standard at a later date. A 14th century painting, representing the siege of a fort by Mahmud of Ghazna, depicts a square standard with a long pendant and the staff surmounted with a yak-tail.[27] An identical flag is depicted in another painting showing the engagement of his troops with the armies of India (Pl. 37).[28]

The early Sultans of Delhi displayed two standards. On the right of the Sultan was carried the black standard of the Abbasids and on the left the red standard of Ghor.[29] Abbasid was the ruling Caliph house during this period and the whole Muslim world owed allegiance to it. The black flag was thus a religious symbol which greatly inspired the faithful.

In the second battle of Tarain, Muhammad Ghori is reported to have carried his standards and banners.[30] In an outflanking manoeuvre he, however, left these behind so as to gain maximum surprise in the battle against his enemies. In the *Prthvirāja Rāso*, there is reference to one Lal Khan who bore a red flag mounted on his elephant and was killed by the Cauhan king Cāmuṇḍarāja.[31]

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The standard of Qutab-ud-din Aibak bore the figure of the new moon and a dragon or a lion.[32] Qutab-ud-din's standards were carried in the forefront during the marches. When he decided to return to Delhi after his successful wars "in a fortunate moment, and under an auspicious bird, the blessed standards were waved and directed towards Delhi, the capital of prosperity and altar of excellence".[33] The army of Alla-ud-din carried banners when it went to fight Kadar. When the enemy had been defeated "the standard bearers of the holy war received orders to bind their victorious colours on their backs."[34]

Tughluq kings were very fond of flags. The flag of Ghiyas-ud-din Tughluq bore the design of a fish when he fought the usurper Nasir-ud-din Khusrow.[35] The flag of Firuz Shah displayed the figure of a dragon.[36] He introduced very heavy and big banners so that they had to be carried on elephants and could be seen at a distance of two or three *krohs*.[37] The manufacture and upkeep of the standards was the responsibility of the state department called *Alam Khānā*. In the reign of Firuz, Afif, the renowned historian, looked after this department on behalf of his father and uncle.

In the Sultanate period the custom of granting honorary standards to *Amīrs* and *Khāns*, who distinguished themselves in war or other matters, had come into vogue. Qutub-ud-Din conferred upon Ikhtiyar-ud-Din Mohammad Bakhtiyar many favours including a standard in appreciation of his remarkable military service.[38] The number of the standards to be granted to a noble depended upon the position held by him in the court. In the reign of Muhammad-Bin-Tughluq, a *Khān* was allowed to carry seven flags and an Amir three.[39] Firuz was liberal in granting flags to nobles. During the battle against Shams-ud-din of Bengal, there were 500 flags belonging to him and his generals on display.[40] Khan-i-Jahan Maqbul celebrated the return of Firuz from Lakhnauti after a successful campaign with a grand show of flags.[41] On the eve of the battle of Panipat, Ibrahim Lodi made liberal grants of standards to all and sundry who joined him. To quote Al Badaoni "to some two hundred Amirs Ibrahim had given royal tents and standards and ensigns and kettle drums, and it frequently happened that to anyone who came and brought with him 10 or 15 horse-men he gave a sort of make-shift flag staff with a bit of red rag wrapped round it, simply to gain favour and to attract people; bestowing upon him also a grant of dignity and a jagir".[42] Indeed, in the later Sultanate

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period, practice of granting standards became so common that it lost much of its old prestige.

A collection of flags, arms and other insignias which followed the king on his marches was known as '*Qūr*'. A repository of these items was known as *Qūrkhānāh*. The officer in charge of '*Qūr*' was called *Qūrbeg*. In the marches generally two of these officers, one for the right wing and another for the left wing accompanied the troops.[43] With the Bahmanis the institution of *Qūrbeg* commanded great respect. Bahman Shāh is reported to have appointed two *Qūrbāks* and two *Naib-Qūrbāks* from among his most trusted servants.[44]

The Mughal Standards

The use of the standards was popular with the Mughals even before their arrival into India. Every ruler carried his standard to the field and its loss in a war, symbolised defeat (Pls. 38, 39). Taimurlang while fighting a losing battle with Tauktumis Khan plotted with the standard-bearer of the latter to invert the standard of his master when the assault was in progress. The stratagem succeeded and Taimur won the war. In another context it is related that a soldier of a Taimur successfully penetrated deep into the enemy lines to invert their standard.[45] These native customs which were not much different from those of the Sultans of Delhi were continued by the Mughals in India.

In the *Bābur-Nāmā* we meet a unique Mughal custom of consecrating the standard before marching to battle. The Khan of Teshkint performed the ceremony after arraying his troops. "This done, the standards were acclaimed in Mughal fashion. The Khan dismounted and nine standards were set up in front of him. A Mughal tied a long strip of white cloth to the end in his hand. Three other long strips of white cloth were tied to the staves of three of the (nine) standards, just below the yak-tails, and their other ends were brought for the Khan to stand on one and for me and Sl. Muh Khanika to stand each on one of the two others. The Mughal who had hold of the strip of cloth fastened to the cow's leg, then said something in Mughul while he looked at the standards and made signs towards them. The Khan and those present sprinkled *cumiz* in the direction of the standards, hautbois and drums were sounded towards them; then army flung the war-cry out three times towards them, mount-

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ed, cried it again and rode at the gallop round them."[46]

The King was always accompanied in war by a standard-bearer.[47] At the siege of Chanderi, Babur rode out to mount an attack with drum and standard. These were not, however, put to any effective use because Chanderi easily feel without any exertions on the part of Babur. This seems to explain the boast of Babur that "by God's grace this renowned fort was captured in 2 to 3 garis without drum and standard with no hard fighting done".[48] The rulers of India who went to Babur to submit were not allowed to carry their standards before him.[49]

How the standard was carried in war by the kings and generals is graphically described in the *Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri*.[51] In a hard battle fought between the royal general, Shajaat Khan, and the rebel Afghan ruler of Dacca on 12th March 1612 A.D., the former tried his best to keep his standard high in spite of heavy odds. At one stage when Shajaat Khan had repulsed the enemy's elephant charge with great difficulty and at a great risk and mounted his horse the enemy drove another elephant at his standard bearer, and overthrew his horse and standard. Shazaat Khan gave a manly shout and roused the standard bearer saying "Be hold : I am alive and the standard is at my feet". At this critical moment all the servants of the state, who were present seized their arrows and daggers and swords and smote the elephant. Shjaat himself came up and shouted to the standard bearer to rise and get another horse for the standard bearer and mounted him on it. The standard bearer unfurled the standard and maintained the ground.

The royal standard was displayed to the right of the throne at the door of the audience hall, at the entrance to the Emperor's encampment and in front of the king during marches.[51] Whenever the king went out five flags were carried along with the '*qūr*' wrapped in scarlet cloth bags. In the reign of Shahjahan, royal march was accompanied by nineteen or twenty elephments, fully caprisoned, carrying the *howdah* of silver and gold with standards fixed on them.[52] Manucci records the following about a march in the reign of Aurangzeb. "Immediately in front of the king went nine elephants with showy flags; behind these nine were other four, bearing green standards with a sun depicted on them. Behind these elephants were nine horses of state, all adorned and ready saddled, after these horses came two horsemen, one carrying a standard with Arabic letters on it, the other with a kettle-drum which he stuck lightly from time

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to time as a warning that the king is approaching".[53] It is noteworthy that princes Roshan Ara Begum's elephant which followed the king's rear guard was also preceded by four elephants with standards.[54] The elephants of the lesser dignitaries of the state displayed the standards of their masters in the war.[55] These were unfurled on days of festivity and on battle days.

The principal standard of the state was called *Ālam*. It was made of scarlet or green cloth. The royal emblem was embroidered on the cloth in gold fringe. The staff was capped by a figure corresponding to the one embroidered on the cloth. The royal standard of the Mughals comprised a *couchant* lion shadowing part of the body of the sun. *Alam* was supposed to be the flag of Hussain which was obtained by Timur at Karbalah. Timur attributed his victory over Bayazid, the Kaisar of Rum, to this standard (Pl. 38).[56] The Mughals no doubt adopted it as their patrimony.

The paintings of the age clearly depict the *Ālam* and other standards and flags known in Mughal India.[57] The flags are triangular, square or oblong in shape. These were made swallow-tailed with a single or a double cut in the fly. These types are best represented in a painting captioned "Processional scene at the court of Jahangir" dated 1605 A.D. (Pl. 38).[58] The main attraction in the procession are the two elephants carrying the standards of the state. One of the standards portrays a sun and a lion symbol on a green field. It is adorned with a saffron fringe bearing black patterns. Another standard bears a deer motif on yellow surface with a purple border. The fly in respect of both these standards is swallow-tailed with double cuts. Slightly ahead of the elephants on each side is represented a group of flag bearers, five in number. Interestingly, these flags although swallow-tailed bear a single cut in the fly. Presumably, these flags also bore some motif.

The account of Gemeli Careri provides almost a similar picture about the display of standards and other ensigns in the Mughal court.[59] "On the left of the tent were the royal ensigns held up on spears by nine persons clad in the vests of crimson velvet all adorned with gold and with wide sleeves and sharp collars. He that stood in the middle held a sun, the two on his sides two gilt hands; next to them stood two others, each holding two horse tails dyed red. The other four had the spears covered

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so that there was no seeing what they held. Without the enclosure of the royal tents, several companies and troops of horse and foot stood at their arms; and elephants with vast standards, and kettledrums on them, which were beaten all the time."

Bernier has also depicted an almost similar picture of the Mughal *Qūr*. "There is this peculiar ceremony in the evening assembly, that all the Mansabdars who are on guard pass before the king to salute him with much form. Before them are borne with great ceremony that which they call Kours ... to wit many figures of silver, beautifully made and mounted on large silver sticks; two of them represent large fish; two others a horrible and fantastic animal called Eiedeha (Azhdoba, a dragon); others are the figures of two lions, others of two hands and others of scales and several more which I cannot here enumerate, to which the Indian attach a certain mystic meaning."[60]

A fine representation of the flags of the age is also seen in a southern Indian painting captioned 'procession of Abdullah Qutab Shah'.[61] In the forefront of the procession is represented the '*Mahi-maratib*' or the fish standard mounted on an elephant, and flanked on either side by nine flag bearers. All the flags are uniform. In the centre of the procession there is another group led by an elephant mounted with a sun standard. On either side it is accompanied by a flag. The symbol on both the flanking flags is, however the same. Behind this group some tailed flags can also be seen. The most important standard of the State, however, followed the royal person in the rear. Qutab Sah bore a swallow-tailed standard of a special make bearing two sun emblems on the field. Some pendants also accompanied the principal standard.

Of the other flag types (Pl. 39)[62] '*Chatrtoq*' was a kind of *Ālam*, though much smaller in size. It is possible that the word should be *Chuturtoq*, from the Turkish *Chutur* or *Chtur* meaning short. It was adorned with bunches of hair taken from the tails and the sides of the Tibetan yak.

'*Tumantoq*,'[63] a third type was like '*Chatrtoq*' but was longer. It generally comprised three yak tails attached to a crossbar which was fixed at the end of a long pole. It may be a derivation from Turkish *togh* (flag) and *tuman* (a division of the thousand) suggesting that generals governing

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troops of a division strength (10,000 troops) were entitled to carry it. The Indian Mughals conferred this flag on their princes and nobles.

Jhaṇḍā was a orange-coloured flag. It bore some figure embroidered in gold or silver.[64]

Qushum-Tugh was another flag type in vogue among the Mughals. One such type was conferred by Akbar on a relative of Mirza Jani Beg in 1595. Nothing is, however, known about the make and shape of this flag.[65]

The Mughal *Qūr* also included some standards received in presentation from the subordinate rulers. *Azhdaha-Paikar*, i.e. dragon face was a sacred motif of the Hindus, which was presented to Timur, probably as a token of submission, by some native ruler. The fish standard is said to have come as a present from some island. *Qumqumah*, which was a polished steel ball suspended from a long pole and carried as an ensign was also offered by an Indian ruler. *Aftāb* i.e. the sun standard was conquerred from the fire worshippers.[66]

Honorary Standards

Among the Mughals there existed a custom of granting honorary standards to the reputed soldiers. Timur conferred such an honour upon one of his soldiers who successfully penetrated the enemy lines to invert their standards.[67] Amirs were also granted this honour in conformity with their rank and status.[68] Timur had ordained that every Amir who should conquer a kingdom or command in a victory should receive a title of honour, the *Tugh* and a *Nakārā*. Earlier nine marshals of Chinghiz Khan were entitled to this honour.[69]

Babur on several occasions conferred the *Tugh* upon his generals for distinguished services. Askari received the insignia and the rank of the royal commander from his father. The presents on this occasion included a jewelled dagger and belt, a royal dress of honour, a drum, a flag and a horse-tailed standard.[70] Muhammad Ali Jang Jang at the time of his appointment to the governorship of the lands between Bhira and river Sind, was granted besides many other insignias, a standard.[71]

Humayun greatly honoured the Ghicker Chief Sultan Adam who had imprisoned Kamran. In token of his appreciation he conferred on

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him a standard besides other insignias of royalty.[72] Byram Beg, a trusted servant of Humayun was honoured with the title *Khan* by Shah Tahmasp of Persia and was granted the permission to use kettle drum and standard.[73]

Emperor Akbar conferred *tugh* on Bairam Khan and Shams-ud-Din Atka in appreciation of their services.[74] Jahangir made the present of a standard to Safdar Khan who held the rank of 1000 personnel and 500 horses.[75] He also presented standards to some other grandees of the state such as Kishwar Khan, Faridun Khan and Maha Singh.[76] On a special occasion Jahangir conferred a *tuman tugh*, a flag and drums on prince Khurrum.[77] He also honoured Khan Jahan Lodi with the present of this standard.[78] Shahjahan picked up Mahabat Khan and Asaf Khan for granting this honour.[79]

In the reign of Shahjahan a new standard called '*Māhī marātib*' became popular.[80] It was originally a Persian institution. This standard was conferred on the worthiest and generally no noble commanding less than seven thousand troops was entitled to it.

The custom of granting standards to generals and nobles, as a token of royal honour, continued during the reign of Aurangzeb. This was done on some special days when customary celebrations were held in the court. Aurangzeb conferred kettle drums, tugh and standards on prince Muizzudin and Sultan Muhammud Azim.[81] One Mir Ibrahim was granted a standard along with other insignias of office on the occasion of his appointment as fauzdar.[82] Firuz Jung Bahadur, when he was sent to help Mohammad Azam Shah during the siege of Bijapur was presented with a robe, the *Māhi* and an elephant carrying it, four banners (nishān) and four hairy (two humped) camels for carrying them and was permitted to kiss the feet of the emperor who stroked him on the back with his hand.[83] It is interesting that Aurangzeb chose to honour Shahu, the son of Sambha and grandson of Shivaji with the grant of a standard when he was only nine year old.[84] He also presented a *tugh* to the ruler of Jaipur in appreciation of the valour displayed by the Hazari Guards of Mirza Raja Jai Singh.[85]

The standard named *Āftabgiri* was conferred upon the royal princess only.[86]

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It seems that entitlement to such royal favours did not always depend on merit. Khan-i-Khanan and other royal officials probably influenced the choice of candidates for such honours. The *Akbar-Nāmā* relates that Bairam Khan "to his own menial servants, whose condition and qualities were well known, gave the titles of *Sultān* and *Khān*, and presented them with flags, kettle drums."[87]

There was also the custom of withdrawing the royal distinctions conferred on nobles for reasons of treason or misconduct. Bairam Khan, the Khan-i-Khanan of Akbar in his early days deprived Nasir-ul-Mulk of such honours stating "You will now make over your standards, drum and other insignia of distinction and of your exhaltation, and betake yourself to the amending of your disposition."[88] When Bairam Khan sank in the royal esteem owing to his treacherous deeds, Akbar deprived him of his royal insignias including the flag, the kettle drum and the *Tuman-Togh* and made them over to Shamsud-din-Atka, a noble of repute.[89] On one occasion, Bairam Khan himself surrendered the insignias of office such as *Tuman-togh*, standard, kettle drum etc. on the approach of the royal army.[90]

The distinguished nobles expressed their disrespect to the royal authority by destroying the royal honours granted to them. Hajy Mohammad, the foster brother of Humayun once got angry with him. So great was his fury that in contempt of the royal power he broke the standards and other insignias of royalty conferred on him by Humayun.[91]

It seems that almost all the nobles and feudatories of the Mughals enjoyed the right to display their own standards. Even small feudatories could carry banners and add scrolls, highlighting their military exploits, on them. Fateh Khan who was a small feudatory of the Mughals, incharge of the Sandvip Island near Chittagong, ordered in 1607 the massacre of all the Portuguese and other Christians. To commemorate the exploit he put a scroll on his banner reading "Fateh Khan by the grace of God, Lord of Sandvip, shedder of Christian blood and destroyer of the Portuguese Nation".[92] It was indeed like adding a battle honour to the regimental flag. Salabat Jang, the Nizam of Deccan, displayed *Pañjāh, i.e.* the hand of Ali and also *Sher Marātib* or lion standard. Incidentally, the Rajputs who guarded the Mughal seraglio in the days of Akbar, mounted guard outside the palace walls under their own colours.[93]

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Hyder Ali of Mysore also made a grandiose display of flags. An eye-witness account says that after the courier and cavalry "marched two elephants bearing the great standard of the *savārī*, being gold embroidery on a blue background; one representing the sun and the other the moon and stars" (Pl. 42).[94] Tipu used a tiger-striped flag (Pl. 42).[95] During the Vellore mutiny of 1806, Indian sepoys hoisted this flag on the ramparts of the fort.[96]

The custodian of the royal standard and emblems of the Mughals was known as *Qūr-Begi*. He carried the royal flag to the battle field and was held in great esteem by the soldiers.[97] Occasionally he was put on important jobs of the state. The standard-bearer of Babur, named, Haidar was once sent to the Baluchis on a political mission.[98] The term *tughchi* was applied to the bearer of the standard *tugh*.[99]

SUMMARY

While the ancient Indian tradition of the *dhvaja* continued in medieval India, the period saw the emergence of a new category of *dhvajas* inspired by the Islamic traditions. The extensive use of the standards was a speciality of the period. The *dhvajas* were liberally granted to their followers by the sultans as tokens of appreciation, particularly for performances in the battle-field. This necessitated classification of standards in various categories as seen in the Mughal period.

The Muslim and Hindu rulers could not remain uninfluenced by each other in this respect. The Mughals added Indian *Jhaṇḍā* to their *Qūr* whereas Marathas greatly revered the *Zaripaṭkā*. It must, however, be remembered that standards continued to be an exclusive royal privilege, and could be used only with royal consent. It is also notable that in medieval India as in the earlier period, there was no distinction between dynastic and military standards. The king carried his standards when he went to the field.

REFERENCES

1. Some late standards have been included in this category because these conform to the indigenous medieval traditions.

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2. Tod, J., *Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan*, Vol. I, p. 196.
3. In the words of Tod the golden sun from the sable field never shown more refulgent than when the 'Changi' was raised amidst the shouts of her defenders over the head of the son of Surajmal. Tod, J., *Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan*, Vol. I, p. 249. *Chang*, the insignia of regality in Mewar is a sun in gold in the centre of a disc of black ostric feathers or felt, about three feet in diameter elevated on a pole and carried close to the prince (*Ibid.*, p. 249).
4. *Ibid.*, p. 270. It was customary among the Rajput chiefs to carry their own standards in war. The Rajput allies of Rana Sangram Singh displayed standards with auspicious signs while fighting Babur in the battle of Kanwa. *Bābur-Nāmā*, p. 549.
5. Tod, J., *Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan*, Vol. II, pp. 2-4.
6. आ स्यनन्दनध्वजधृतोद्धरताप्रच्ड.
   श्री कर्णदेवनृपसूनुखं रणाग्रे
   यद् युद्धोत्सव दर्शनैकरसिकः श्रीताप्रच्डध्वजो
   देवः पश्यत् नाधुनापरिः प्रत्येकातपत्राँयहीम्
   Quoted in *Kavyānuśāśana* of Hemcandra, Vol. I, Intro.
7. Das, B.S., *New Light on the Sun Temple of Koṇārka*, Pl. 19a.
8. *Ibid.*, Pl. 11A; Ganguly, D.C., *Koṇārka*, Pl. 71.
9. For information on the subject I am grateful to Shri Karni Simhji, formerly Maharaja of Bikaner.
10. The story is related that once Bikaji, the founder of the state, undertook to liberate a compatriot imprisoned by a Subedar. In this adventure Karneji the mother goddess, guided him through all difficulties in the shape of a kite. Hence the ruler gave the bird a place of honour in his standard.
    The additional features, shield with lion supporters and crest is a modern phenomenon and exhibits European influence.
11. For all information on Jodhpur flag I am grateful to Shri Jaswant Simhji, formerly Maharaja of Jodhpur.
12. For information on this *dhvaja*, I am grateful to Shri Yeshvantrao Hindurao Ghorpade of Sandur.
13. "Shivaji made current certain special symbols of royalty connected with the royal throne (Simhāsaṇa). Certain royal symbols like the *Zarī-paṭkā*, the Daṅkā, etc. were used in ancient times. These were renewed by Shivaji at the time of his coronation after giving them proper authority of the Śāstras. The *Bhagvā Zendā* was formerly used by many warriors. The Maratha Sardars used this flag generally

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when proceeding to the battle field. *Zarī-paṭkā* was a dignified transformation of this flag. It was Shivaji who first made it a symbol of royalty, though it was later adopted at several places in the Maratha Empire. The *Zarī-paṭkā* was not meant to be used at all times in warfare but it was displayed on special occasions during processions. The Bhagvā Zenda was used before Shivaji's time by his father Shahji." Sardesai quoted by Gode, P.K., *IHQ*, Vol. XVI, p. 42. It is popularly believed that the colour was chosen by Shivaji to honour his Guru, Ramadasa by incorporating the colour of the Guru's saintly garment in the kingdom's flag. Sarkar relates that Shivaji "rode through the streets of the capital in full military procession . . . with two royal banners, *Zarī-paṭkā* and *Bhagvā Jendā* borne aloft on two elephants walking in the van". Sarkar, J.N., *Shivaji and his Times*, p. 230. James Douglas, however, gives still better details: Shivaji's standard Bhagvā Zendā was swallow tailed and of a deep orange colour, but on a big day like this the *Zarī-paṭkā* or the golden streamer, the national ensign of the Marathas no doubt waved from the great arch which still crowns the highest plateau of Rajgarh." James Douglas, *Bombay and Western India*, Vol. I, p. 173.

14. *Gode*, P.K., *IHQ*, Vol. XVI, pp. 47-48.
15. Sen, S.N., *Administrative System of the Marathas*, p. 129.
16. For this information we are grateful to Major General Shahaji Chhatrapati of Kolhapur.
17. Egerton, W., *Indian Oriental Armour*, p. 114.
18. Sen, S.N., *Administrative System of the Marathas*, p. 129.
19. *IHQ*, Vol. XVI, p. 40.
20. Sen, S.N., *Administrative System of the Marathas*, p. 130.
21. In this sub section the terms flag and standard are indiscriminately used to convey the same sense.
22. *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, Vol. XII, p. 145; There are some traditions about the flags used by the prophet. It is said that he used two flags known as *Rayat* and *Liwa*. The former was of a black square sheet and big in size and the latter white and smaller. These were granted to Commanders and tribe-leaders by the prophet with the assurance that whosoever came under its protection would be safe and secure. Some people call *Liwa* and *Rayat* as the same. For details, see Khan, G.M., *Journal of Nagpur University*, 1943.
23. *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, Vol. XII, p. 145. It may be stated here that the Caliph often sent emblems, the robe of honour or diploma and a standard to rulers as a token of recognition. These were indeed highly valued by the recipients. *The Cambridge History of Islam*, Vol. I, pp. 236, 240, 242, 252.

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24. Elliot and Dowson, *History of India*, Vol. I. p. 120.
25. Lane Poole, S., *Medieval India under the Muhammadan Rule*, pp. 36-42.
26. *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, Vol. XII, p. 146.
27. Blochet, E., *Musalman Paintings*, Pl. LVII.
28. *Ibid.*, Pl. LIII; It is stated that Mahmud and his successors submitted and paid homage to the Abbasid Caliphs and received diplomas, titles and banners in return. As the Abbasids used a black flag they must have sent a similar one to him. For details see Khan, G.M., *Journal of the Nagpur University*, 1943.
29. Qureshi, G.M., *Administration of the Sultanate of Delhi*, p. 143. The black colours came to be associated with the Abbasids since Abu Muslim hoisted them. "The hoisting of the black flags, later accepted as the emblem of the house of Abbas had at this stage a messianic significance. Black flags were among the signs and portents listed in the eschatological prophecies current at the time, and had been used as emblems of religious revolt by earlier rebels against the Ummayads. Their use by Abu Muslim was thus an appeal to messianic expectations". *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Vol. I., pp. 15-16.
30. Singh, R.B., *The Chahamanas*, p. 202. It is notable in this context that the Rajput king's colours were being carried by camels in this battle. *Prthavīrāja Vijaya*, X. X.20.
31. *Prthavīrāja Rāso*, Vol. III, 134. The expression is : it should be more appropriately translated as standard of red elephant-head.
32. Qureshi, G.M., *op. cit.*, p. 143.
33. Hasan Nizami as quoted by Elliot, H.M., *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 229.
34. Elliot, H.M., *History of India*, Vol. III, p. 71.
35. Tughluq-namah of Khusro quoted by Qureshi, G.M., *op. cit.*, p. 144.
36. Qureshi, G.M., *Ibid.*, p. 144. Also Ashraf, K.M., *Life and Conditions of the people of Hindustan*, p. 70.
37. *Ibid.*
38. Elliot, H.M., *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 230.
39. Qureshi, G.M., *op. cit.*, p. 144.
40. *Ibid.*
41. Ahmed, M.A., *Early Turkish Empire of Delhi*, p. 168.
42. *Muntakhabu—Tawarikh* of Al. Badaoni, Vol. 1, p. 543.
43. *Tarikh-i-Bihaqui*, quoted by Qureshi, *op. cit.*, p. 144.
44. Husaini, S.A.Q., *Bahman Shah*, p. 141.

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45. Yazdi, S.A., *Political and Military Institute of Taimurlang*, p. 44.
"In Asiatic encounters the disappearance or retreat of the grand standard of the Prince has ever been, and still is, attended with the loss of battle. This standard is conspicuous for its size and accompanies that body of troops immediately headed by the prince himself. The eyes of the whole army are fixed upon it. While it continues displayed and advancing, the troops are satisfied that their prince is still with them, but the moment it disappears or retreats they conclude that he is either slain or flyiny from the field and the dispersion of his forces immediately follows". *Ibid.*, p. 104.

46. *Babur-Nāmā*, pp. 155; Also see Akbar Nāmā, pp. 178, 179.

47. *Babur-Nāmā*, pp. 140, 595, 640; *Tuzkereh Al Vakiat*, p. 90.

48. *Babur-Nāmā*, pp. 595-596.

49. *Ibid.*, p. 640.

50. *Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri*, pp. 210-11.
In the composition of the Mughul army standards played a useful part. "It was composed of the immediate followers of the king and those of the great chiefs attached to them from various confederations. Every leader had his standard, which marked his rank the highest being that of '*tugh*', a standard surmounted by the flaring tail of the mountain cow an object of growth, ambition and granted only to a few. Round these standards they marched to battle and round them they rallied if broken." Erskine, W., *History of India under Humayun*, p. 541.

51. Ansari, M.A., *Social Life of the Mughal Emperors*, p. 96.

52. Ansari, M.A., *op. cit.*, p. 149.

53. Manucci, N., *Storia Do Mogor*, p. 64.

54. *Ibid.*, p. 66

55. *Ibid.*

56. Bernier, F., *Travels in the Mughal Empire*, p. 266 fn. 6; Also seen Canby, C., *A History of Weaponry*, Pl. on p. 33; The sun and the lion are generally considered as symbolic of the sky and the earth. The lion was a popular symbol with the royalty in the contemporary world. The Moghuls of Khorasan represented it on their coins. Incidentally, sun is also related to lion (Leo) because of their Zodiacal affinity. See Khan, G.M., *Nagpur University Journal*, 1943.

57. Blochet, E., *Musalman Paintings*, Pls. 135, 139.

58. Percy Brown, *Indian Paintings under the Mughals*, Pl. 31.

59. Sen., S.N., *Indian Travels of Thevenot and Careri.*, p. 221.

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60. Bernier, F., *Travels in the Mughal Empire*, pp. 266-267. The symbol of a pair of scales, in gold and colours can still be seen in the middle of the screen of marble tracery work separating the Diwan-i-Khas from the private rooms in the palace at Delhi.
61. Stella Kramrish, *A Survey of Paintings in the Deccan*, Pl. XVII.
62. *Ain-i-Akbari*, Pl. IX.
63. *Ibid.*; Phul, R.K., *Armies of the Great Mughals*, pp. 210, 211; Irvine, W., *The Army of the Indian Mughals*, pp. 33-34; Athar Ali, M., *The Mughal Nobility under Aurangzeb*, p. 141.
64. Phul, R.K., *Armies of the Great Mughals*, p. 211.
65. *Ibid.*, p. 210.
66. *Ibid.*
67. Yazdi, S.A., *Political and Military Institutes of Tamarlane*, p. 104.
68. *Ibid.*, p. 105.
69. Yules Note in *Marco-Polo*, pp. 263-64; The Mughal Commanders went to war displaying their standards. Abdul Aziz a commander of Babur while reconnoitering against the Rana in the vicinity of Kanwa was overpowered and lost his standard. *Babur-Nāmā*, p. 548.
70. *Babur-Nāmā*, p. 628.
71. *Ibid.*, p. 393.
72. *Tezkereh Al Vakiat*, p. 104.
73. *Ibid.*, p. 68.
74. *Akbar-Nāmā*, p. 182; Also Phul, R.K., *op. cit.*, p. 210
75. *Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri*, p. 167.
76. *Ibid.*, p. 168.
77. *Ibid.*, p. 87.
78. Phul, R.K., *op. cit.*, p. 210.
79. *Ibid.*, p. 211.
80. Athar Ali, M., *The Mughal Nobility under Aurangzeb*, p. 141. For details see Irvine, W., *op. cit.*, pp. 33-34; The honour was known in the Sultanate period as well.

    The honour as conferred on Lord Lake is described as "representing a fish with a head of gilt copper and the body and tail formed of silk fixed on a long staff and carried on an elephant". Irvine, W., *op. cit.*, p. 33.

    The *mahi-maratib* of mahadaji Sindhia was "a brass fish with two chourees hanging to it like moustachios. Irvine, W., *op. cit.*

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81. *Masir-i-Alamgiri*, p. 86; Also see p. 171, 181.
82. *Ibid.*, p. 87.
83. *Ibid.*, p. 163.
84. *Ibid.*, p. 200.
85. Maharaja of Jaipur, *A History of Indian State Forces*, p. 56.
86. Irvine, W., *op. cit.*, p. 34; In the 18th century, however, the Marathas adopted it as one of their commonest ensign, and even the smallest group of their cavalry was in the habit of carrying one. *Ibid.*
87. *Akbar-Nāmā*, p. 162.
88. *Ibid.*, p. 131.
89. *Ibid.*, p. 182.
90. *Ibid.*, p. 158.
91. *Tezkereh Al Vakiat*, p. 109.
92. O'Malley, L.S.S., *Eastern Bengal District Gazetteer, Chitagong.*
93. *Ain-i-Akbarī*, pp. 40, 45; Manucci, *Storia De Mogor*, Vol. II, pp. 332, 352.
94. BMMDLT, *History of Hyder Shah alias Hyder Ali Khan Bahadur*, pp. 175-176.
95. The standard of Tipu Sultan being carried aloft is represented in an illustration 'Tipu Sultan's Palace of Seringapatnam'. *Fort William—India House Correspondence*; Vol. XVI, p. 387.
96. Longer, V., *Red Coat to Olive-green*, p. 55.
97. Phul, R.K., *Armies of the Great Mughals*, p. 209.
98. *Babur-Nāmā*, p. 383.
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8

Military Flags of Modern India

As the earlier chapters show, the use of the *dhvaja* in warfare and ceremonials had become standard practice in ancient and medieval India. It continued to be so in the British period. The advent of the British trader on the Indian political scene, however, gave a new meaning to the *dhvaja*, reflecting European traditions. It came to denote a flag, banner, colour, standard of guidon under which the Company's troops, cavalry and infantry, joined battle. A new vocabulary and new rules and protocols came into vogue.

Evolution of British Flags

The roots of the British military flags *i.e.* standards, guidons and colours are traceable to Greek and Roman history. It was, however, in the early medieval period that their use became imperative when heavy body armour made the recognition of warriors almost impossible. To allow their followers to identify them in battle, the leaders bore the ensigns of heraldry about their person, on their shields and on their armorial banners and pennons attached to their lances and floating in the wind high above their heads. The banners borne in the Battle of Hastings of 1066 AD and the Battle of Standards of 1138 AD provide some definite indications of their use.

The use of the flag as a distinguishing mark of warriors and troops continued in the medieval period. The Red Cross of St. George, the

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banner of the English troops during the Crusades, also served as a distinguishing mark. The modernisation of armies necessitated some systematisation in the use and display of flags and this was to an extent achieved by the early seventeenth century. "Animade versions of War" by Ward published in 1639 is a reliable guide on the subject. In the chapter dealing with the "office and duty of a colonel of a Ragiment" it is said that "he aught have all the colours of his Regiment to be alike both in colour and in fashion to avoid confusion so that the soldiers may discern their own Regiment from other troops, likewise, every particular captain of the Regiment may have some small distinction in their colours . . . so that one company may be discerned from another."[2]

Regimental colours as we know them to-day, however, came into use in the Civil War of 1642-50, and like all previous battle flags, were the personal banners of the officers who raised the battalions or companies. Generally speaking the armies bore one standard[3] per troops of cavalry and one colour[4] per company of infantry. As there were ten or more companies to a battalion, with special flags for the Colonel, the Lieutenant Colonel, the Major and all the Captains it may be imagined what an array of colours was to be seen during a battle. The regiments connected with royalty bore royal badges in their colours whereas the other regiments carried the Colonel's badge.

This was the time when the English traders made their appearance on the Indian coast. These traders used a trade-mark or *Nishān* for the purpose of trade and the same was borne by the company troops on their flags. Captain James's "Military Costumes of India" includes a flag with the merchant's trade mark.

Infantry Colours

In the earliest phase of the Company's rule in India the troops were organised in three presidential armies, those of Bangal, Madras and Bombay. The scheme of colours carried by these armies followed the British pattern. Abraham Shipman's Regiment raised in 1662 A.D. for the King's service in East India, subsequently associated with the Bombay presidency, possessed four silk colours. Each of the four companies of the regiment bore a colour. The other troops in the Company's service also carried colours. As early as 1755 each Company of the Madras

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sepoys employed two colourmen. Companies of the Bengal Native Infantry were also provided with a stand of colours. In the centre of the colours was placed the Subedar's device such as sabre, a dagger or a crescent. Morgan-Ki-Paltan raised in 1673 as a new corps of Bengal Army carried the flag of St. George as its colour.

The Royal warrant of July 1751 issued to systematise the use and display of colours in the British army is significant in this context. It reduced the number of colours with regiments to two viz. King's and Regimental, respectively, and forbade Colonels from putting their devices on the colours and determined the shape and size of the colours. Consquently, the system of company colours was abandoned and the custom of carrying a pair or stand of colours by each battalion adopted in the Presidency armies of India.

But more than anything else it was the Military Consultations Bengal, 1781 which laid down detailed regulations with regard to the use and make of the regimental colours of the British Indian forces. It stated that "the first colour of each battalion shall be great union throughout, and the second the colour of the facing of the regiment; except those regiments which were faced with black, which shall have a white field with the union in the upper canton. The number of the regiment shall be embroidered in gold Roman letters within the wreath in the centre of the middle colour of each battalion."

The system thus prescribed, with certain modifications from time to time, has remained the basis of the colours of the Indian army. In short the colours carried by the regiments were two, one the flag of the state and the other its own colour. The former, i.e. the King's colour was generally the state flag (Union Jack) occasionally imbibed with the number of the regiment and mounted by a crown. The latter was also patterned on a certain uniform system, though distinctions as regards the tint of the cloth the form of the wealth, the inclusion of the Union Jack in it, the design of inscribing the battle honours etc. are noticeable. Yet in every regimental colour the basic design is the same. The background colour differs from unit to unit, depending upon the colour of the facings of the uniform. On this are inscribed the name and number of the regiment in the centre inside a wreath. Round this wreath the battle honours are

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inscribed in scrolls. But there was no uniformity about these, because the number of scrolls depended on the number of honours.

Subsequent to the transfer of power from the company to the crown some changes took place in the military flags of India as well. A major change was the substitution of the 'Royal Crown' for the East India Company's crest—'a Lion Passant Regardant holding a Crown' in 1867. Hereafter the union wreath also became universal and the deviation like the one of oak-leaf wreath with the Bengal Native Infantry discontinued. The system has remained almost the same since then.

The Rifle Corps did not carry colours owing to their special service condition.[5] An infantry regiment which changed over to rifles discontinued the use of colours.

We have seen above that the infantry Regiments were entitled to the use of two colours viz. the King's colour and the Regimental colour. Certain regiments of army, however, possessed an additional colour which they carried even on parade. To put a stop to this an army order was issued in 1933 which forbade the use of the third colour by the battalion of the infantry of the line.

Cavalry Standards

As the colours are to be infantry so are the standards to the cavalry. The evolution of both progressed on almost similar lines. The antiquity of Indian cavalry standards goes back to 1784 when four regiments of the Nawab of Arcot were taken over by the company and provided with standards.

In the early stages each cavalry regiment was allowed three standards, one for each squadron.[6] The first squadron standard, also called the Royal Standard, was dark blue with Royal arms in the centre and small union in the upper corner next to the staff. The second squadron standard was crimson with the East India Company's arms embroidered in the centre. The third squadron standard was of the colour of the regimental facing with union wreath bearing the number of the squadron in the centre. There were four small wreaths in the four corners of the standard for appropriate use. The system applied to all the cavalry

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regiments with minor variations. With the Madras Army the first or the King's standard was crimson but the same in respect of Bengal and Bombay armies was blue. The second and third standards in respect of the Madras army were of the colour of the facing unlike the Bengal army who had it crimson.

Honorary standards and colours in recognition of distinguished service were granted to the regiments by the East India Company. The 35th Scinde Horse and 26th Jacob's Horse were honoured this way for their services in Sindh in 1843. Later the Poona Horse was authorised to carry a standard surmounted by a silver hand bearing a Persian inscription. The practice of granting honorary standard, was subsequently discontinued.

Standards as also the colours bear battle honours in the form of names of action or campaign. The practice started in late eighteenth century with the grant of honour "Emsdroff" to 15th King's Light Dragoons. The custom subsequently came into vogue in India as well.

In 1864 it was decided that standards should be abolished in the Native cavalry. Regiments in possession of standards were allowed to retain them but they were not in future to be carried on parade or to the field nor were any to be issued to regiments not possessing them.[7] Consequent to this the appointment of *Nishanbardar* ceased and all existing ones were regarded as Lance-Dafadars.[8]

In the forties the custom of granting standards to the Squadron of the Royal Indian Air Force also came into vogue. The institution of Squadron standard accepted by the Indian Air Force is based on the British usage.

Services Flags

Besides the cavalry standards and infantry colours there was another group of flags which may be called the Services' Flags. These represented the three services i.e. Army, Navy and the Air Force.

Of these Army Flag comprising the Royal crest, a Crowned Lion, standing on a Royal crown placed at the junction of crossed sword on a

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red field was introduced in the Indian Army in 1940. After its introduction in the British Army in 1938 the Indian Army also adopted it.

To start with, this new pattern of flag distinguishing army was introduced in two sizes (12in×6in and 6in×3in) for use by different formations. The larger size was to be displayed at Command and Western (I) District Headquarters on occasions of purely military character. Smaller size was to be displayed at all recruiting offices. On occasions when representative matches were being played the sports associations could also use it. The crest on the Army Flag could be used by units and formations on christmas and invitation cards etc. Hereafter the PSO's cars and mounted orderlies were to bear the flags of the new colour with the new Army Crest superimposed.

After India became independent some modifications were introduced in the Army Flag. The British Crown was replaced by the Aśoka Lions and the Tricolour was depicted in the first quarter of the flag. The crossed swords and the red colour were, however, retained.

The royal Indian Navy also used the White Ensign of the Royal Navy. It comprised the Red Cross of Saint George on a White field with the Union Jack in the upper canton. This White Ensign flew at the ensign staff at the stern of the ships. After India became a Republic this ensign was retained by the Indian Navy with some minor modifications. The Union Jack in the Upper canton was replaced by the Tricolour thus giving it an Indian look.

The Indian Air Force also had no flag of its own in the beginning but used the Royal Air Force Flag. In 1942 it was presented with a distinguishing ensign of light blue with the Union Jack in the upper canton. It bore red and white and blue roundel superimposed on a five pointed diamond star in the half away from the staff. After India became a Republic the Union Jack was replaced by the Indian National Flag, the five pointed star was left out and the colour of the roundel was changed from blue white and red to green, white and saffron, corresponding to the colours of the National Flag.

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Rank Flags

Another class of flags in vogue with the Indian Army is called distinguishing flags or rank flags. These had become common by the first quarter of the 20th century. In 1921 the following flags were flown on motor cars by officers on duty.

His Excellency the Commander-in-Chief—Union Jack

General Officer Commanding in Chief—Black Cross on red ground.

General Officer Commanding Districts—Red pennant.

In 1924 a French grey flag with a black cross superimposed was introduced for the Principal staff officers of the Army Headquarters.

In 1925 some more changes were introduced and the under-mentioned flags were authorised to be flown on motor cars or carried by mounted orderlies.

1. His Excellency the Commander-in-Chief—Flag Union.
2. General Officer Commanding in Chief—Flag distinguishing Headquarters of an army (red, black, red).
3. Principal Staff Officers at Army Headquarters—French grey.
4. General Officers Commanding Districts—Flag, Distinguishing Division (red swallow tail).
5. DA and QMG and the senior GSO in a Command—Flag distinguishing HQ of an Army (red, black, red) at the discretion of the GOC-i-C.
6. Brigade Commander—Flag, distinguishing Brigade (blue pennant).

The size of the flags mentioned above was 9 inches by 6 inches for

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carriage on motor cars and 18 inches by 12 inches for carriage by mounted orderlies.

This system of distinguishing flags continued in use with minor changes till 1940. In this year the Army Flag was introduced and the rules governing its use and display declared the existing patterns of Principal Staff Officers' flag obsolete and introduced a new scarlet flag with Army crest superimposed on it.

After India became independent these distinguishing flags continued in use except for some minor changes in rules governing their use and display. Broadly speaking the flags of the officers of the rank of General and Lt. General are rectangular, for Major General Swallow tail and for Brigadier pennant. The appointment in all cases is indicated by the Formation Sign indicated on the flag. The use of the British Crown on the flags wherever it occurred has been dropped. Creation of some new appointments such as Field Marshal and Vice Chief of the Army Staff has led to the introduction of some new distinguishing flags.

The officers of the Royal Indian Navy also displayed distinguishing flags. Admiral, Vice Admiral and Rear Admiral used a rectangular white flag with a red cross. The vice Admiral's flag was marked by a red ball in the first quarter. The Rear Admiral's flag had one red ball each in the first and second quarter. Commodore 1st Class used a white swallow tail flag with a red cross on it. Commodore 2nd Class used a similar flag with a red ball in the first quarter. It is notable that all the ships in commission when commanded by an officer of the flag rank, displayed the officer's rank flag at the main mast head. These distinguishing flags have also been adopted by the Indian Navy with the change that in all flags a Dharma-Cakra is depicted at the centre of the red cross.

Like the officers of the other two sister services the officers of the Royal Indian Air Force also used distinguishing flags. Air Marshal used a rectangular flag with five horizontal stripes in the order red, sky-blue, green, sky-blue and red. The flag of Air Vice Marshal was similar excepting that it bore two thin green stripes instead of one in the centre. Air Commodores' flag was exactly like that of the Air Marshal's excepting that it was swallow tail. Group Captains' flag was a pennant with a similar combination of colours. Wing Commander's flag was similar to that of

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the Group Captain excepting that it bore two horizontal green lines instead of one in the centre. Indian Air Force has now adopted a completely new pattern of distinguishing flags.

The flag of the chief of the Air Staff is now a sky blue rectangular representing the National Flag in the first quarter, the Air Force crest in the third quarter and the Air Force target in the fourth quarter. The Air Marshal's flag is also a sky blue rectangle with the Air Force target surmounted by the Air Force Eagle in the centre and three stars in the fly. The flags of Air Vice Marshal and Air Commodore are also similar excepting that they bear two and one stars respectively in their fly. The flag of Group Captain is a sky blue pennant with the target superimposed by eagle in the centre. The Wing Commander's flag is also similar but it bears a simple target in the centre.

Consecration, Trooping and Laying up of Colours

There are some interesting customs related to the use and display of colours. These pertain to the consecration, lodging or trooping and laying up. Before being put to use a colour is consecrated at a special religious ceremony which is usually performed during the parade at which the colour is presented. This is connected with the age old connection of colours with the church. Lodging or trooping is one of the most fascinating rituals associated with the colours. Originally it was a simple affair connected with the lodging of the colour at the end of the fighting or parade. Gradually it became elaborate. In 1755 the ceremony was associated with the Guard Mounting Parade of the Foot Guards to lend colour to the occasion. The term trooping was substituted for lodging at a later late as the music played at the lodging was called 'Troop'.

The custom of disposing of old colours is known as 'Laying Up' ceremony. It is as impressive as the consecration ceremony. In the beginning the disposal of unserviceable standards, guidons and colours was the responsibility of the Commanding Officer of the regiment but the clothing Regulation of 1898 made it a state affair. The King's Regulations (Reprint 1945) para 940 reads : "Old standards, guidons and colours remain the property of the state. After replacement, they will be laid up in a church or other public building .... They will not be otherwise disposed of without War Office sanction." Such a ceremony to lay up King's colours was held in 1949 at the Armed Forces Academy,

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Dehradun (now known as INDIAN MILITARY ACADEMY).

The Standard-bearer

The Office of the standard bearer commanded a great respect. Rules were framed from time to time to regulate the functioning of this office. The loss of colour meant a great humiliation and no sacrifice was considered too great to protect it from falling into enemy hands. Annals of war are replete with examples where the incumbent of the office of the standard-bearer paid dearly for the trust reposed in it. At the end of the 19th century the use of colours and standards in war was discontinued as the price paid for them in terms of human life much outweighed their utility. The last occasion when these were seen on the battlefield was the 26th January 1881, when carried in action by 58th Foot. The Indian Army also followed the British usage in this respect.

In the end it may be stated that colours and standards were objects of great respect among the troops. In fact the oath of fidelity was administered to each recruit before the regimental colour. It was the highest punishment for a regiment to be deprived of its colours.[9]

SUMMARY

The advent of the British on the Indian political scene in the 18th century introduced an alien system of flags in India. It was directly related with the army formations such as companies, battalions or regiments. Rules were made from time to time to regulate the make, use and display of flags by various army units. One interesting feature of the military flags of the period was that these were separate from the Royal standard. These flags owing to their origin in religion were considered sacred and no sacrifice was considered great to save them from falling into enemy hands. The colours and standards are no more carried in war.

REFERENCES

1. In the British period the state flag and the military flag had become separated. For information in this section I am greatly indebted to Bullock's "*Indian Infantry Colours*" and "*Indian Cavalry Standards*", T.J. Edward's "*Standards, Guidons and*

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Colours of the Commonwealth Forces," and "*Military Customs*", P.G. Hering's "*Customs and Tradition of the Royal Air Force*," and F.G. Cardew's "*Bengal Native Infantry*."

2 Ward as quoted by T.J. Edward in *Regimental Badges*, p. 8.

3. The standard was the largest of the numerous flags flown in armies in the middle ages. As the name implies it was a flag made to stand, as opposed to being carried. *Ibid.*, p. 8.

4. The term colour came to be applied to infantry flags before the end of sixteenth century for their diversity of hues. *Ibid.*, p. 7.

5. The Rifle Corps was first created in the second half of the 19th century to meet the challenge of the tribals in the north-west India. The effort was to keep the movements of the troops secret and therefore, no colours were carried to the field by the Rifle Corps.

6. These observations are based mostly on the rules existing with the Bengal Army.

7. Cardew, F.G., *A Sketch of Services of the Bengal Native Army*, pp. 332, 333.

8. *Ibid.*, p. 333.

9. In September 1795 it was intended to send a battalion of Bengal sepoys to Malacca with a view to secure the possession of this port. Captain Grant had prevailed with the battalion (15th) under his command to undertake the service. But after a few days that battalion showed a disinclination to embark cheerfully to Malacca. It was therefore, decided not to send this battalion. But as a punishment 15th battalion was broken with infamy and its colours burned in November 1795. Taraporewala, Y.J., *Fort William—India House Correspondence*, Vol. XVII, p. 546.

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Conclusion

The institution of the *dhvaja* in all societies originated under almost similar circumstances and for a similar purpose. The need felt by primitive communities to stress their identity and unity and the use of the tribal totem for that purpose seem to lie at the root of the institution.

In the beginning the totem was carved on wooden or stone slabs but with the progress of time a pole was attached to ensure proper display. Still later, drapery was appended to it. Significantly, the form of *dhvaja* in use among ancient civilizations was almost the same. It is therefore, not reasonable to seek the origin of this universal institution in the *Yūpa* of the Vedic Āryans or the *stambha* or pillar widely represented in the art of India and Greece.

Dhvaja has been treated as a sacred object by people all over the world from the earliest times. The Vedic Āryans revered it almost as a deity. Indians sought protection in this holy symbol in war as well as in peace. The Turks, who established an empire in India in the thirteenth century, gave the *dhvaja* the same respect as the Hindus, even though their standards were inspired by the Islamic tradition. The Mughals also attached great sanctity to the standards. The British rulers of India treated their standards and colours as sanctified objects which were deposited in a church when worn out.

This study covers three different periods of Indian History each dominated by a different set of people. Though basically the Brāhmaṇas, the Muslims and the Christians who formed the ruling class in ancient, medieval and modern periods had an identical approach to the *dhvaja* some minor variations existed in the use and display. These variations, however, make the study look disjointed. But short of the last two chapters it will not be possible to provide the reader a connected account of the evolution of the institution in India from the earliest times to 1947.

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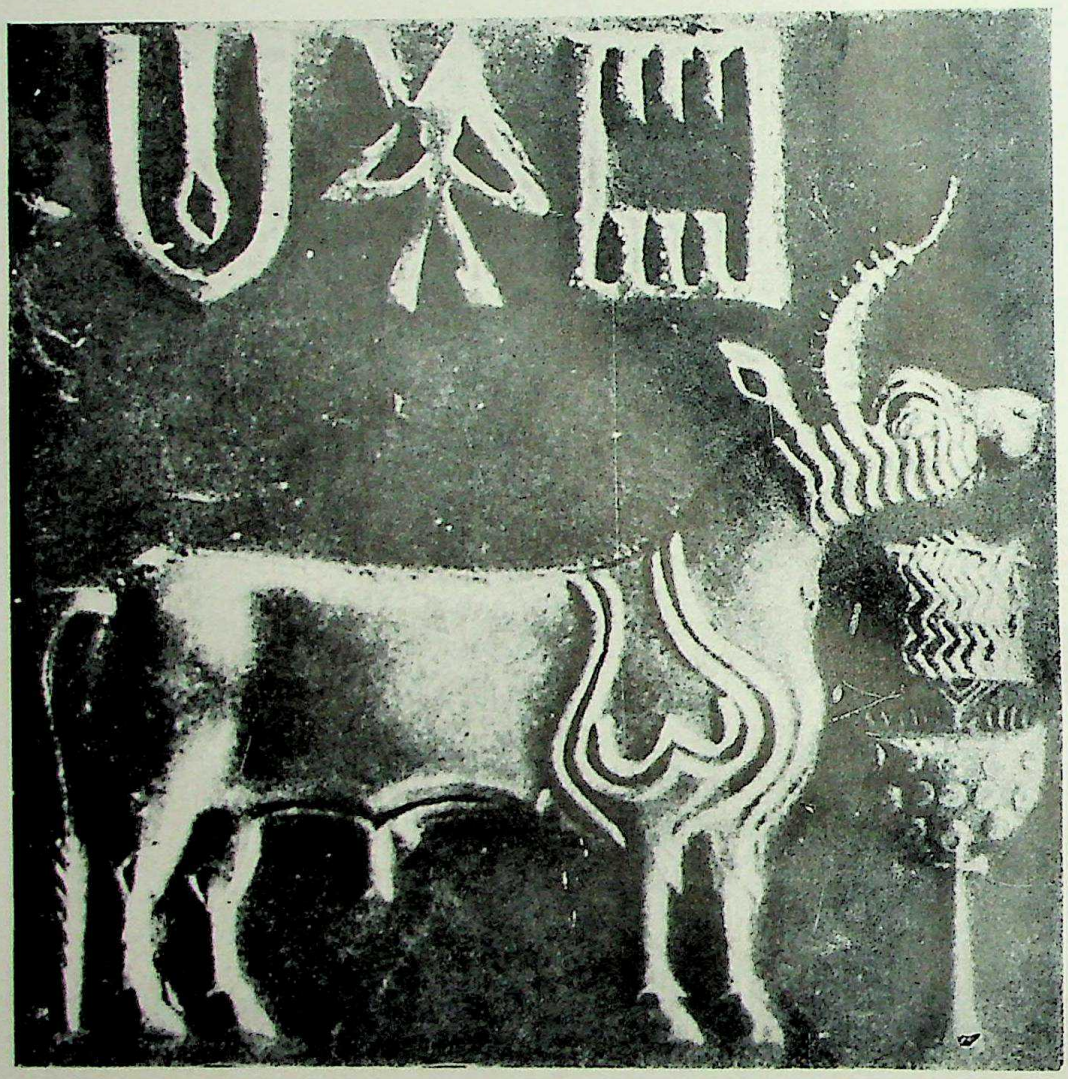
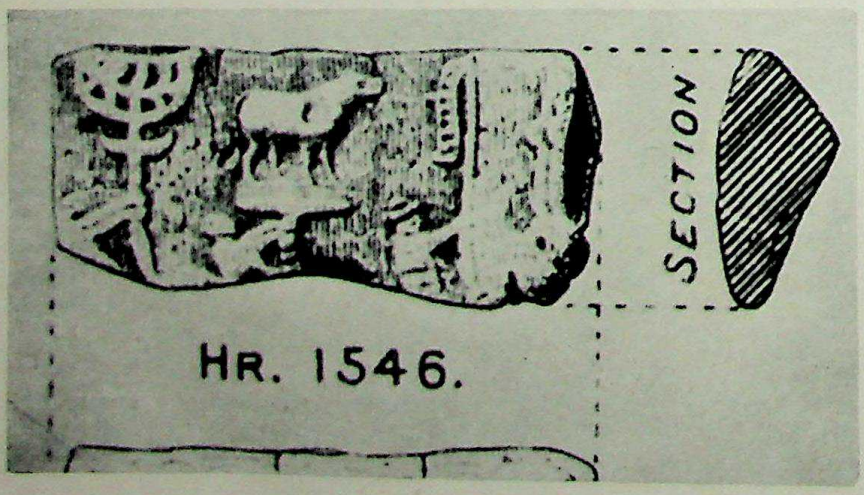


2. Dhvaja motifs, Indus seal



3. Indus valley seal, Dhvajins

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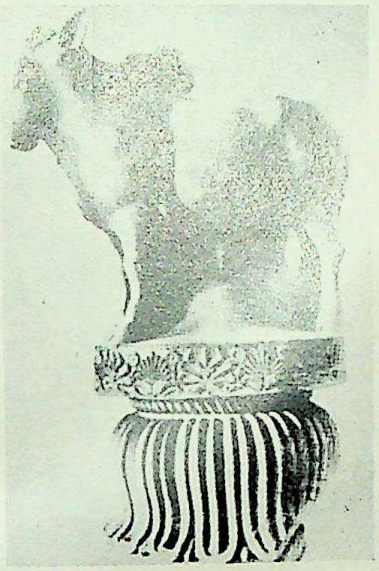
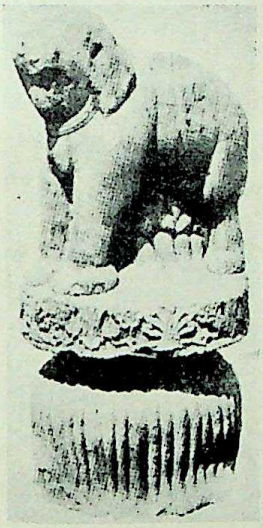
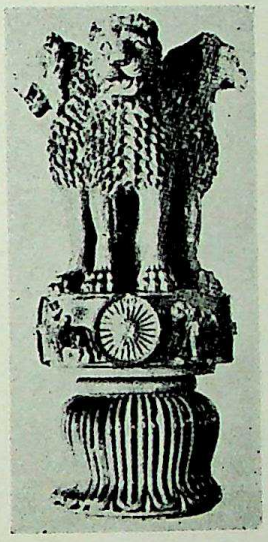
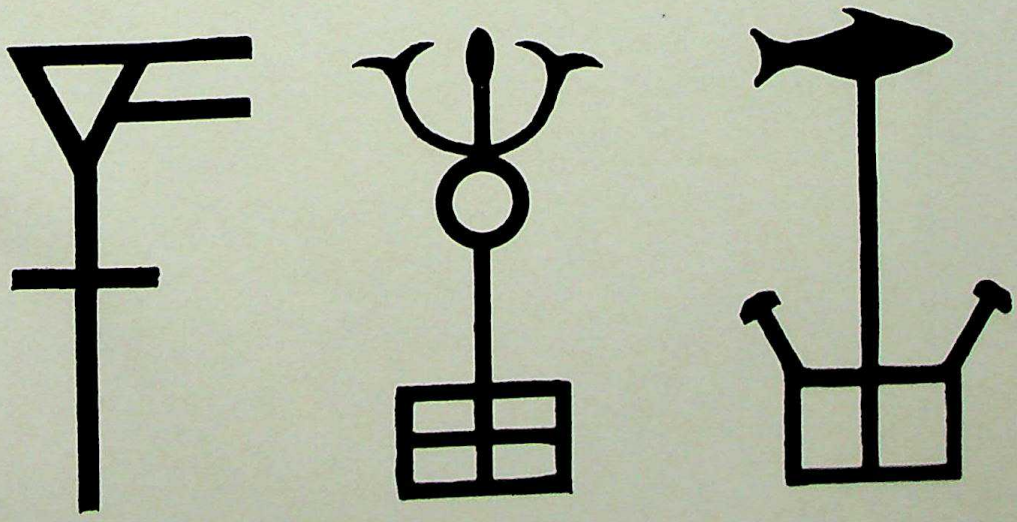






4. The Rampurva Bull-capital ↑ The Sarnath Capital
The Sankisa Elephant-capital



5. Dhvajas on Punch marked coins

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7. Bhaja, Indra with his Dhvajin

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8. Bharhut, Dhvajin (male)

9. Bharhut, Dhvajin (female)

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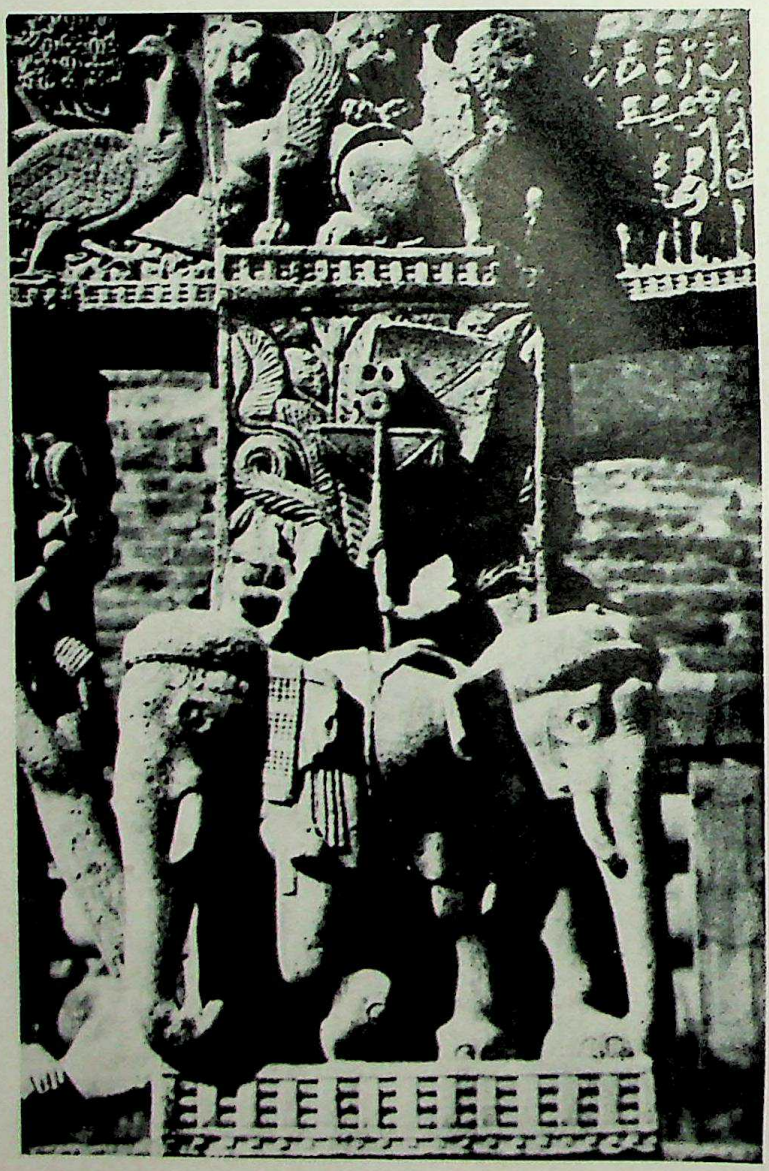

10. Sanchi, Dhvajin

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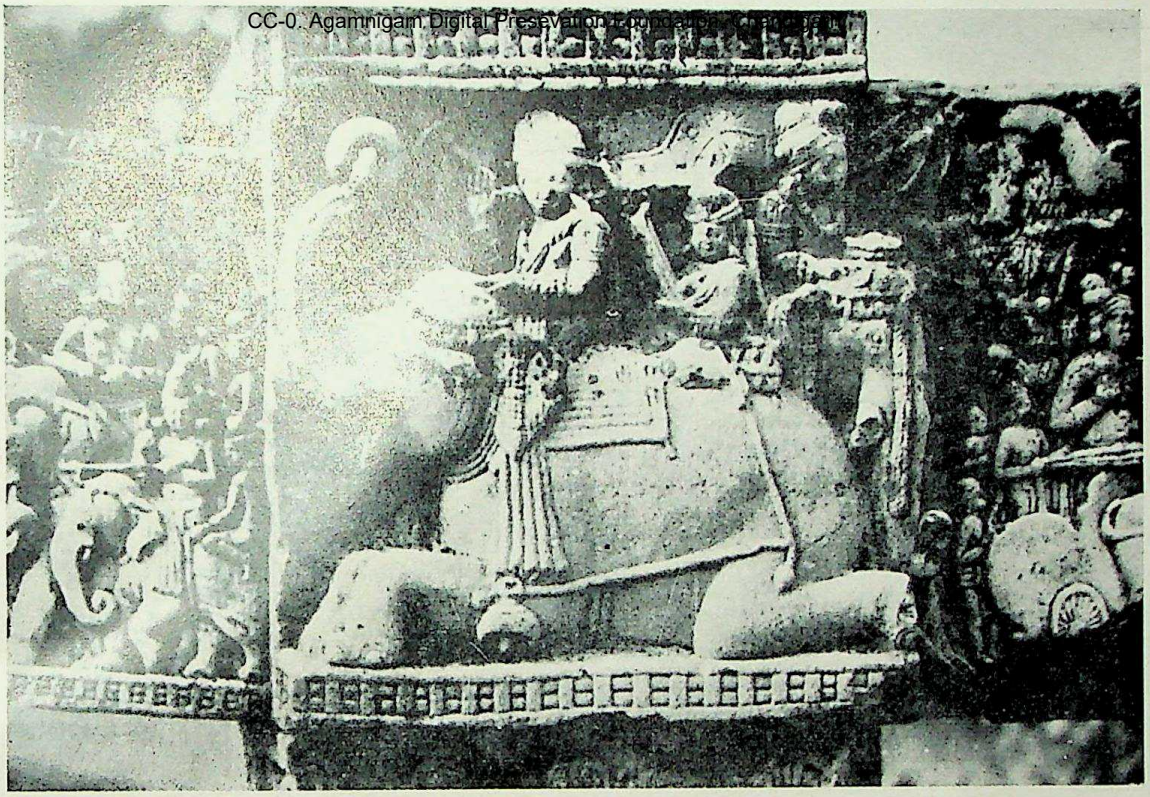
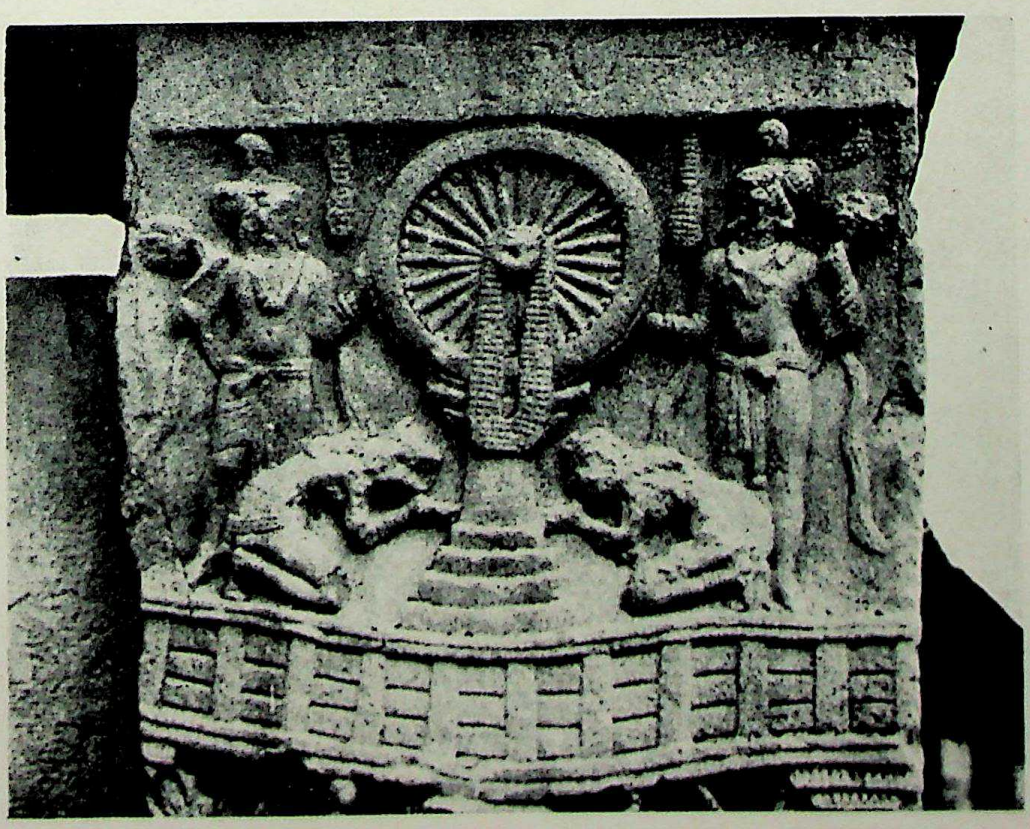


11. Sanchi, King with Dhvajin



12. Sanchi, Dharma-Cakra-dhvaja

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13. Candrardha-dhvaja of Samudra Gupta

14. Cakra-dhvaja of Kaca Gupta

17. Vrsabha-dhvaja of Narendraditya

15. Garuda dhvaja of Samudra Gupta

16. Garuda-dhvaja of Kumara Gupta

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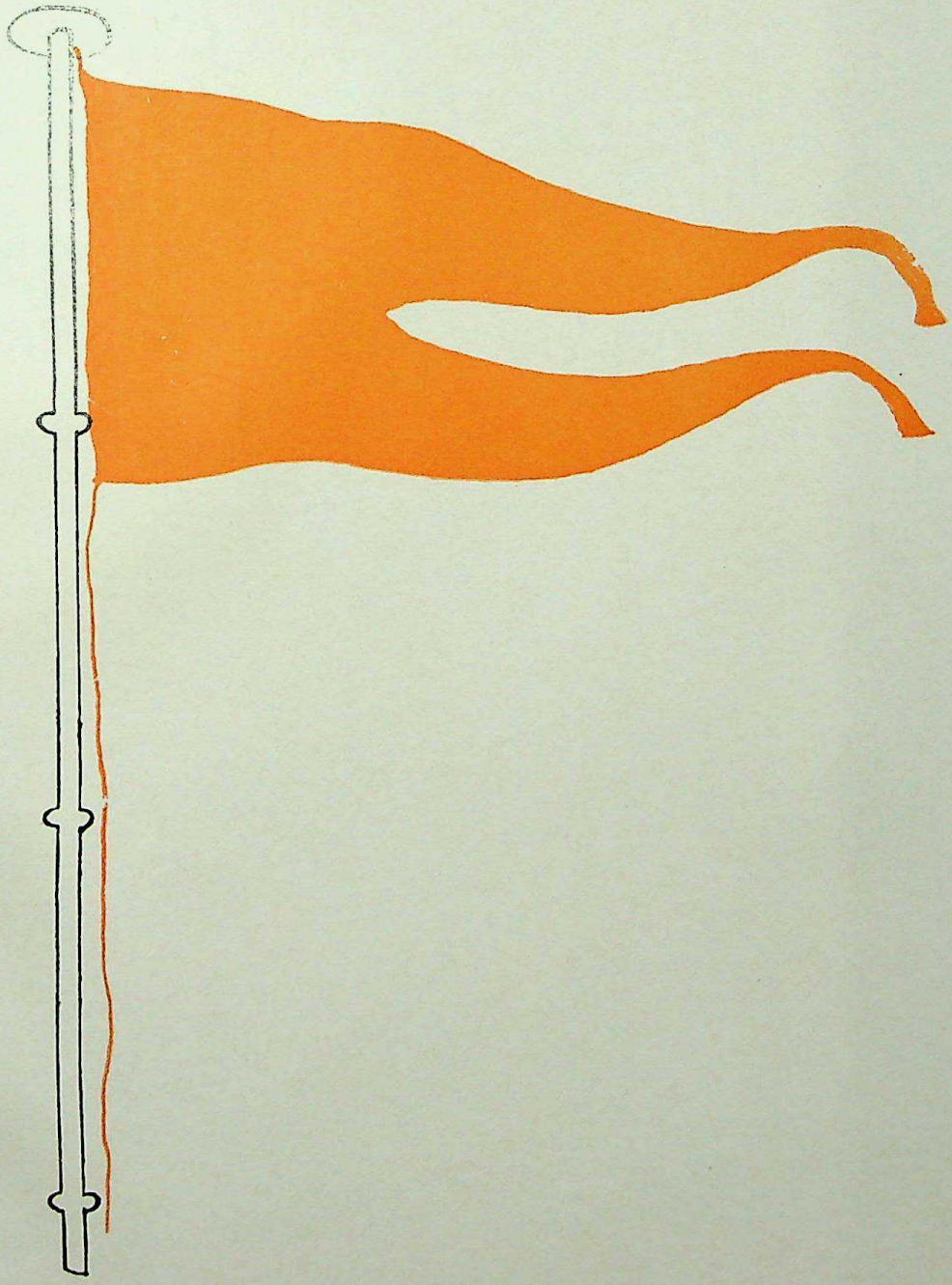

Bhagva Jhanda
(Kolhapur State)

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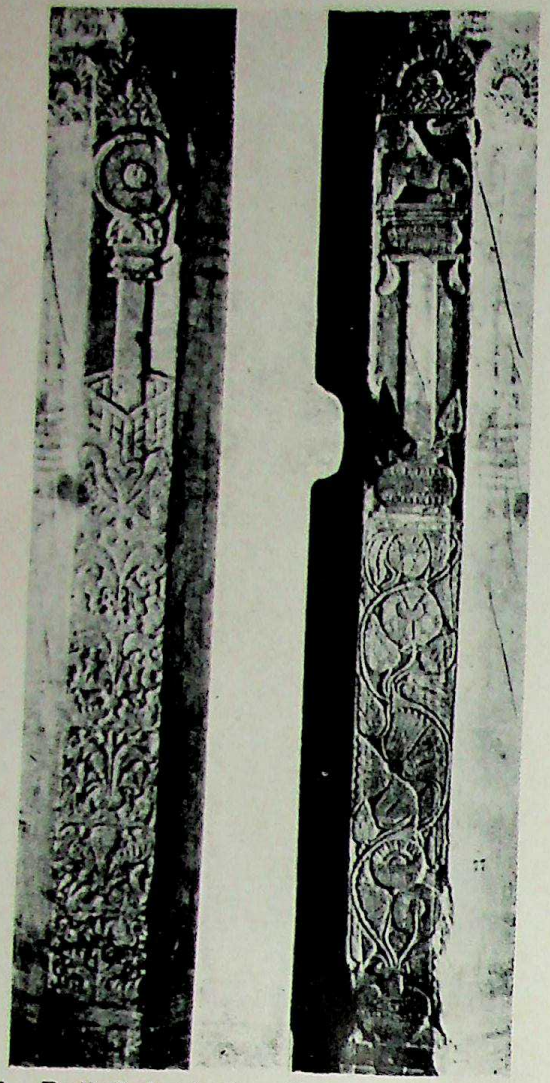
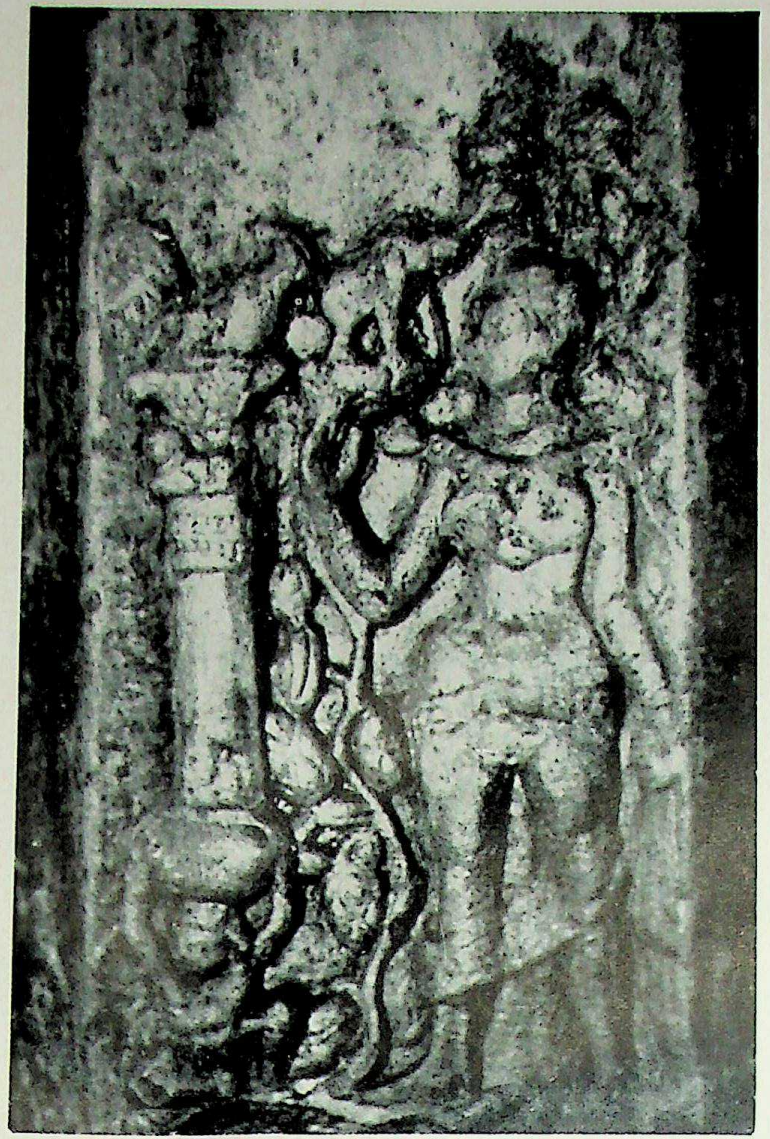
18. Ahichatra, Varaha-dhvaja and Candrardha-dhvaja



6. Relief depicting Cakra dhvaja, Amravati.



19. Lalabhagat, Kukkuta-dhvaja

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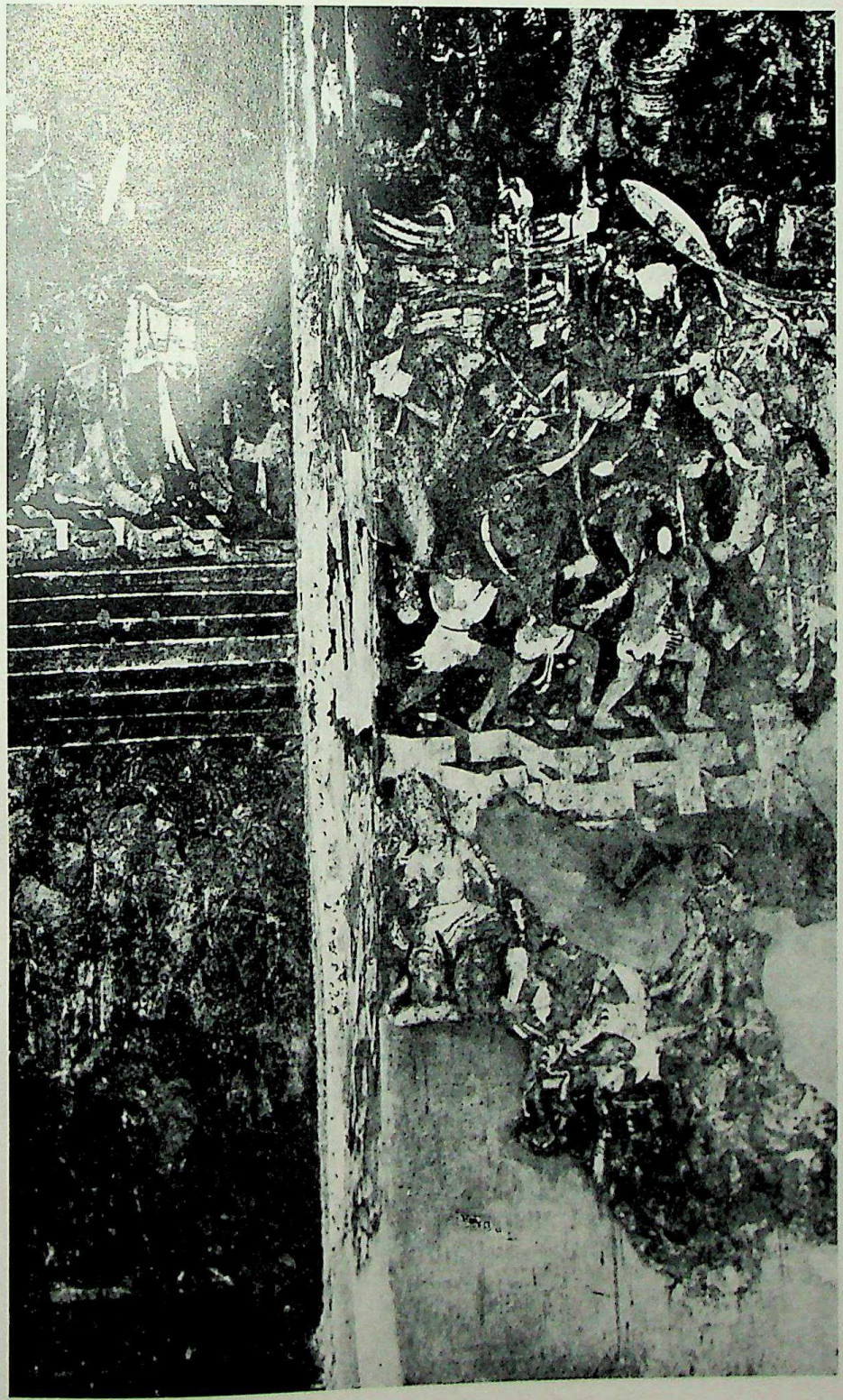

20. Ajanta, a war scene

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21. Ajanta, a royal procession

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

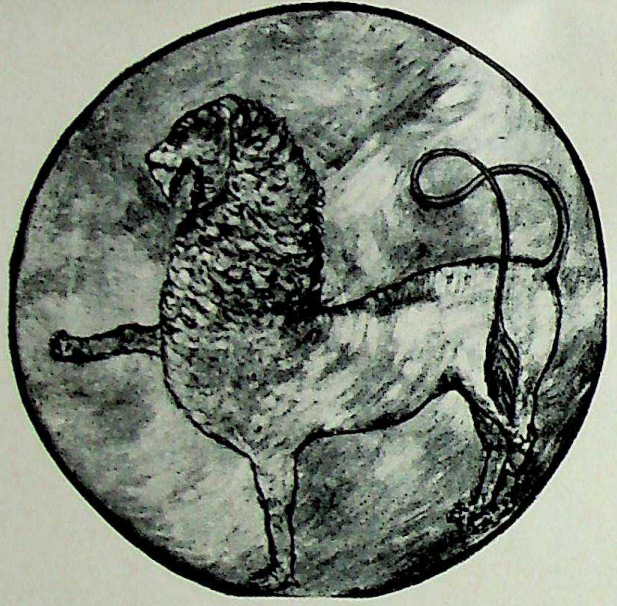
22. Ajanta Cave, a procession

23. Vrsabha-dhvaja of Pallavas

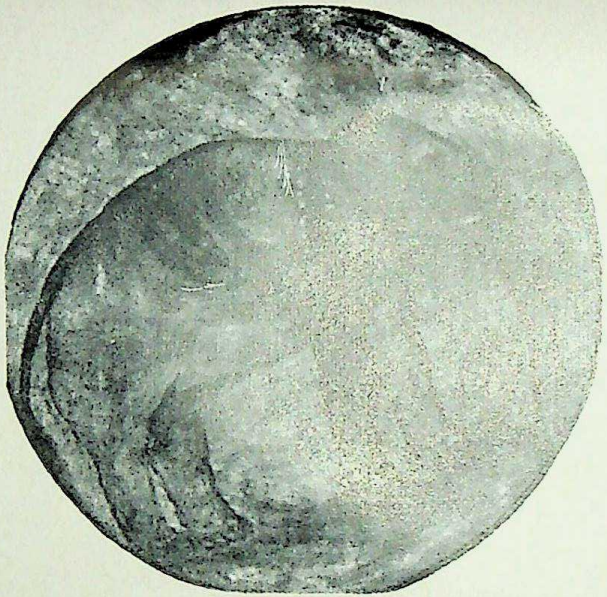
24. Varaha-dhvaja of eastern Calukyas

25. Matsya-dhvaja of Pandyas

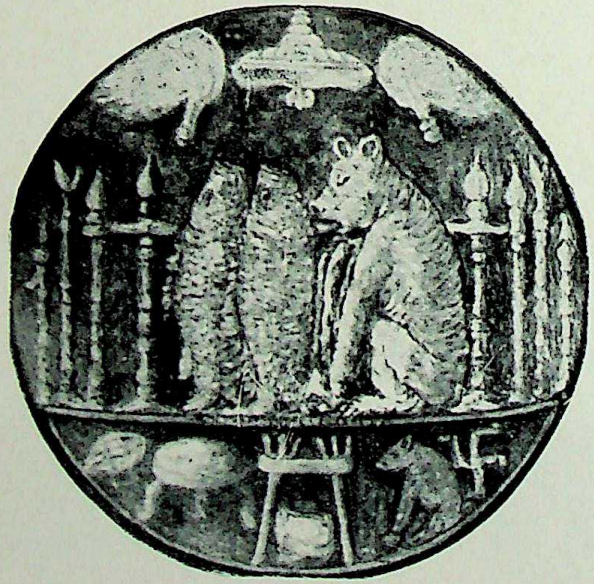
CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh



26. Vyagra-dhvaja of Visnukundins



27. Hasti-dhvaja of S. Kerala



28. Vyagra-dhvaja of Colas

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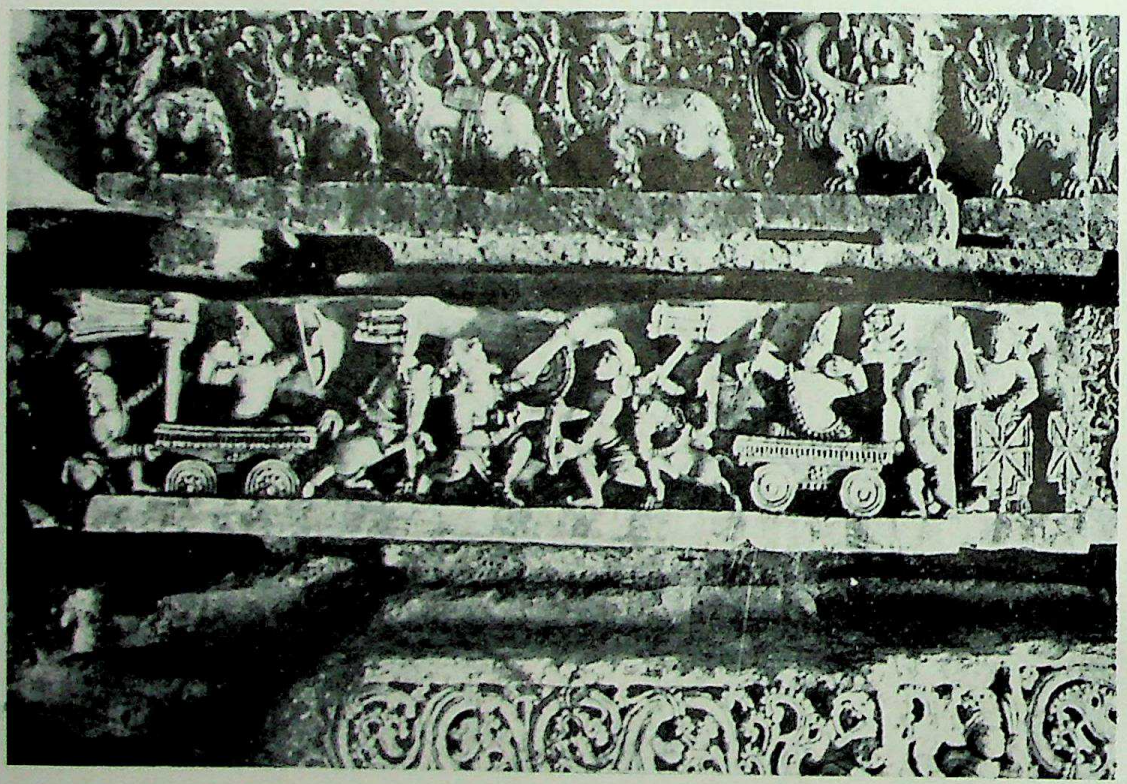
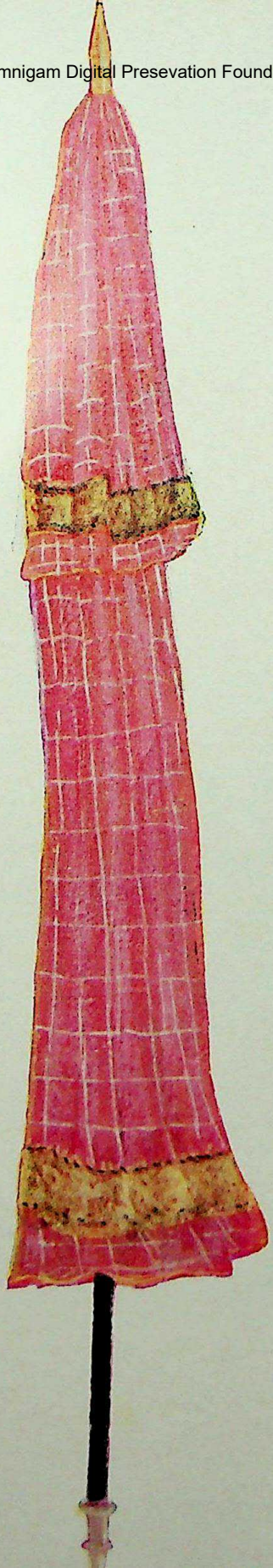
CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh



29 Helebid, A war scene from Mahabharata

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh



Jari-Patka
(Kolhapur State)

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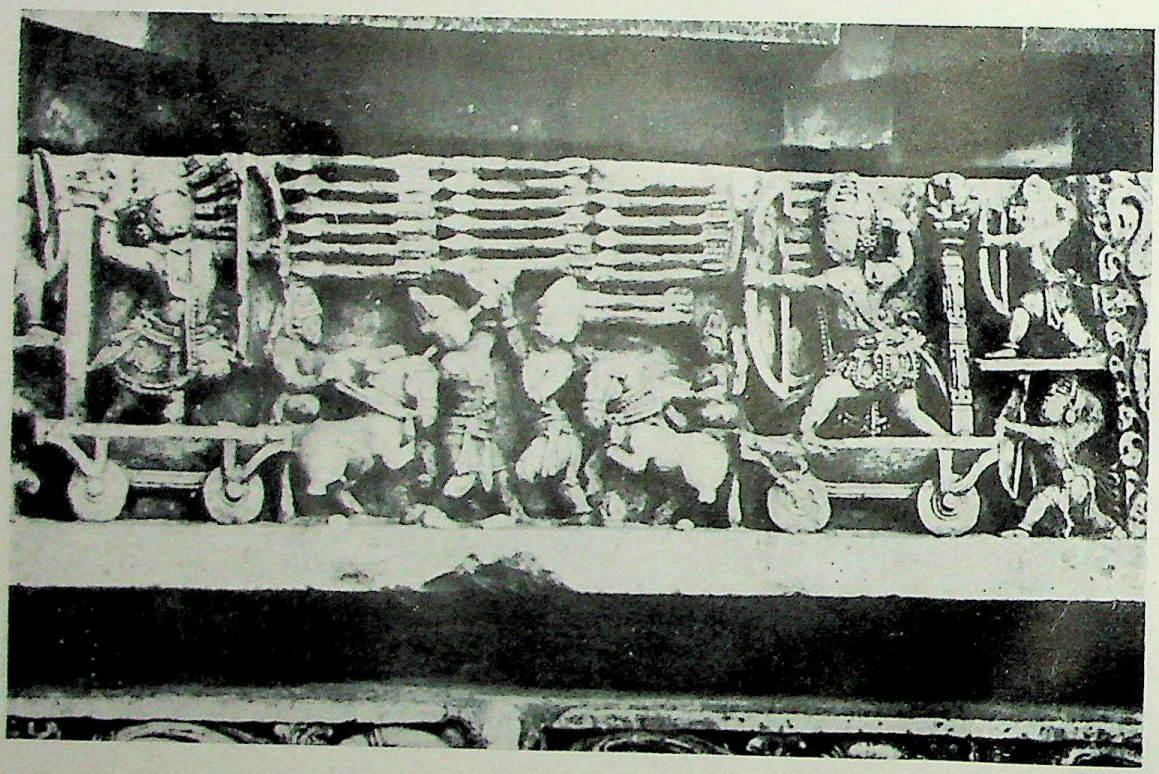
CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

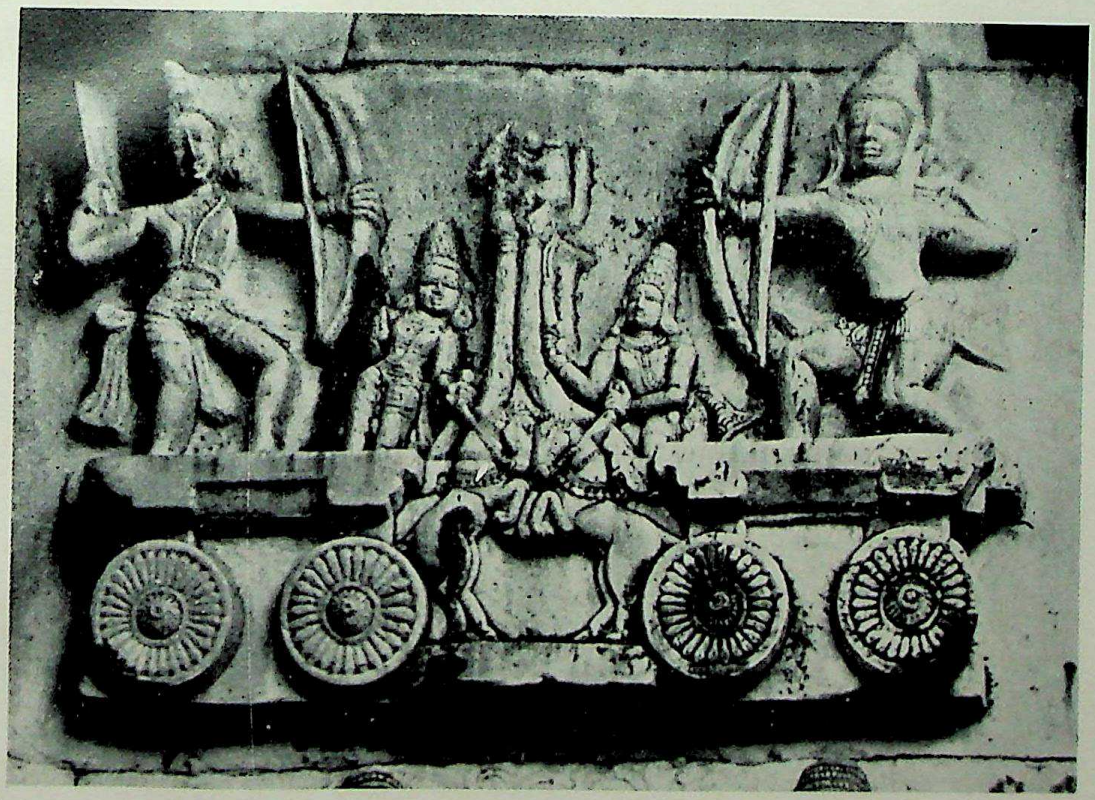
30 Helebid, A war scene from Mahabharata

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh



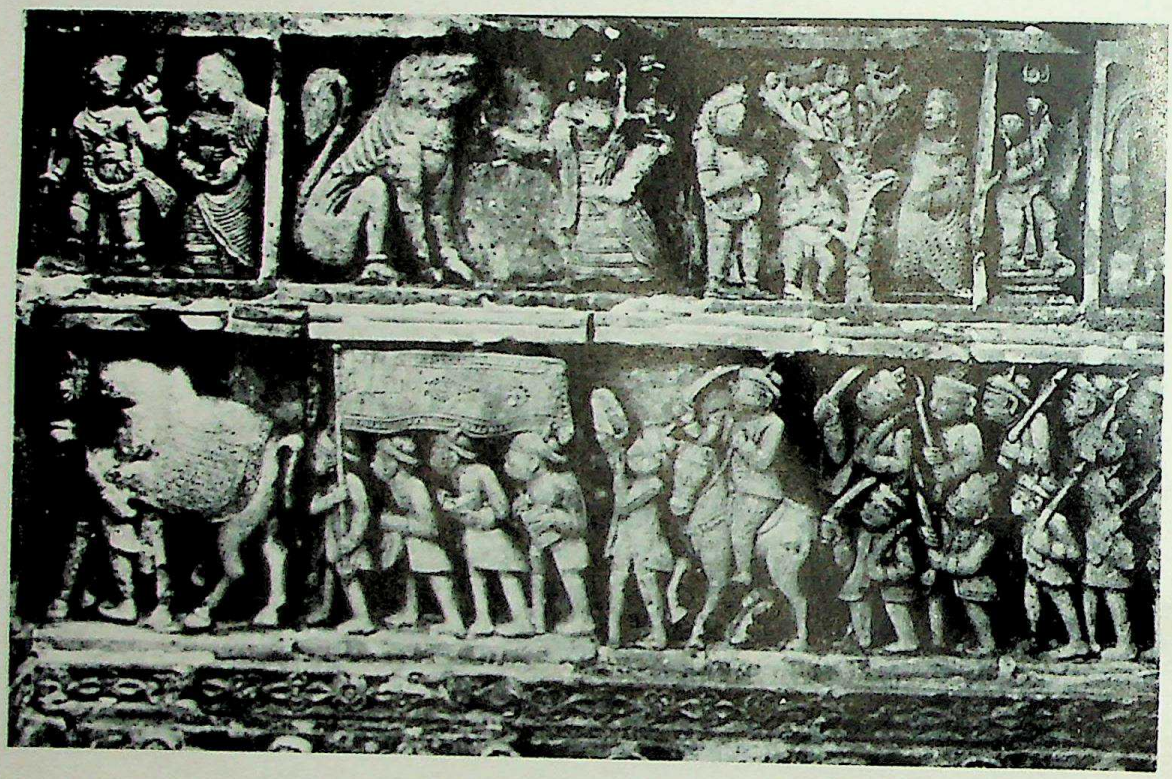
31. Helebid, A war scene from Mahabharata

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh



32. Puspagiri, A war scene from Mahabharata

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh



33. W. Bengal, Charbangla temple, A war scene

34. Vijayanagar emblem

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35 Raichur fort, a chariot scene (13th century)

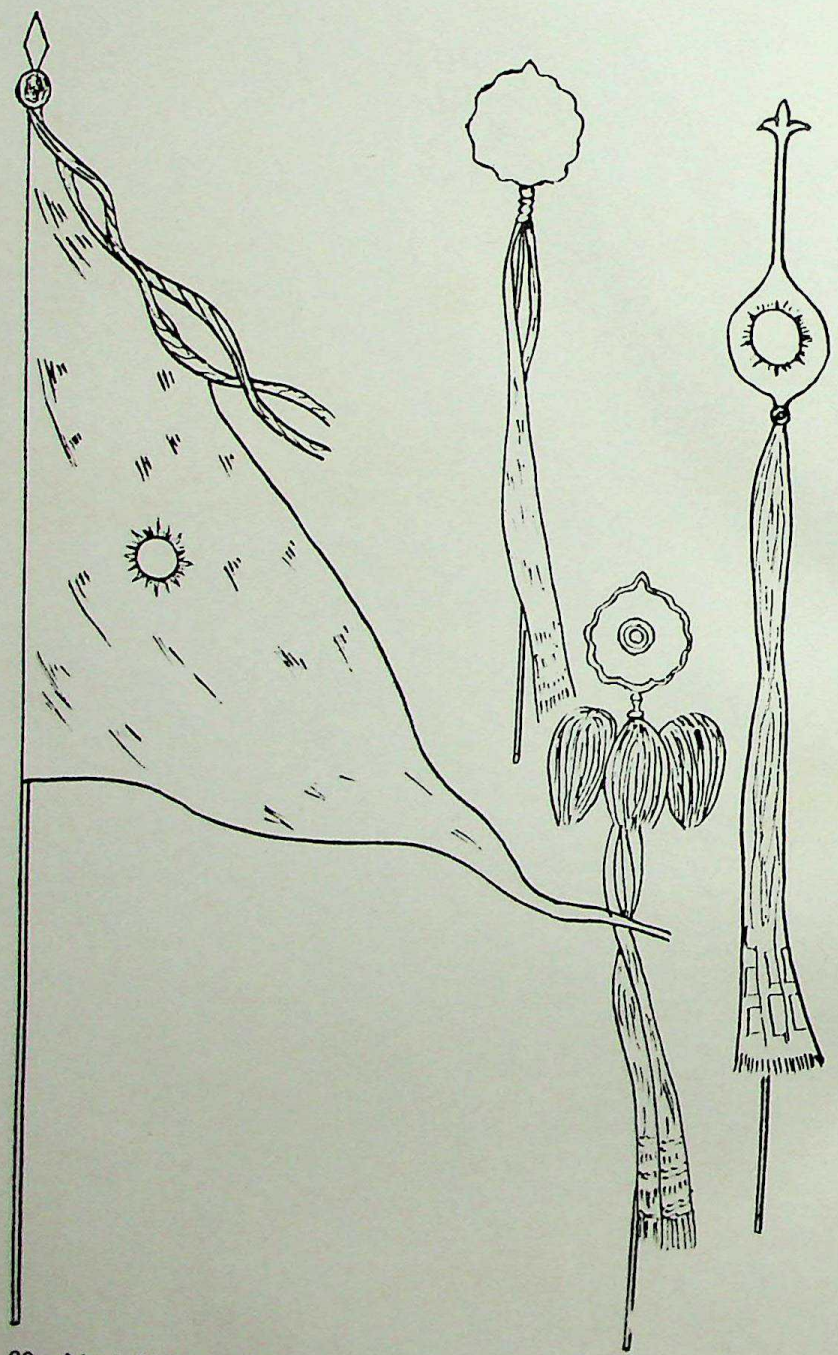
CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

37. Shahnama, Ghaznavid standards

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

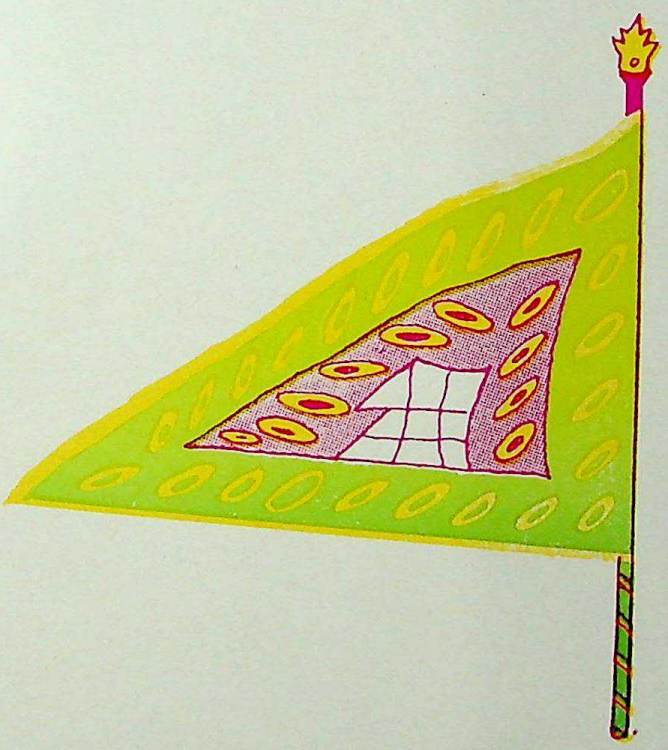
38. Procession of Jahangir

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh

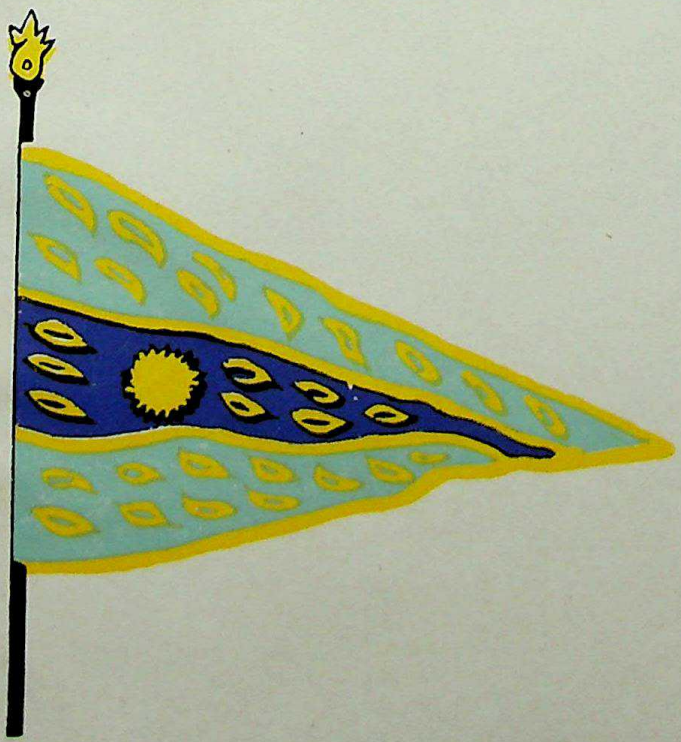


39. Ain-i-Akbari, Mughul standards

CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Presevation Foundation, Chandigarh



Two standards which were borne in state before
the Sultans Hyder Ali and Tippoo Sahib



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